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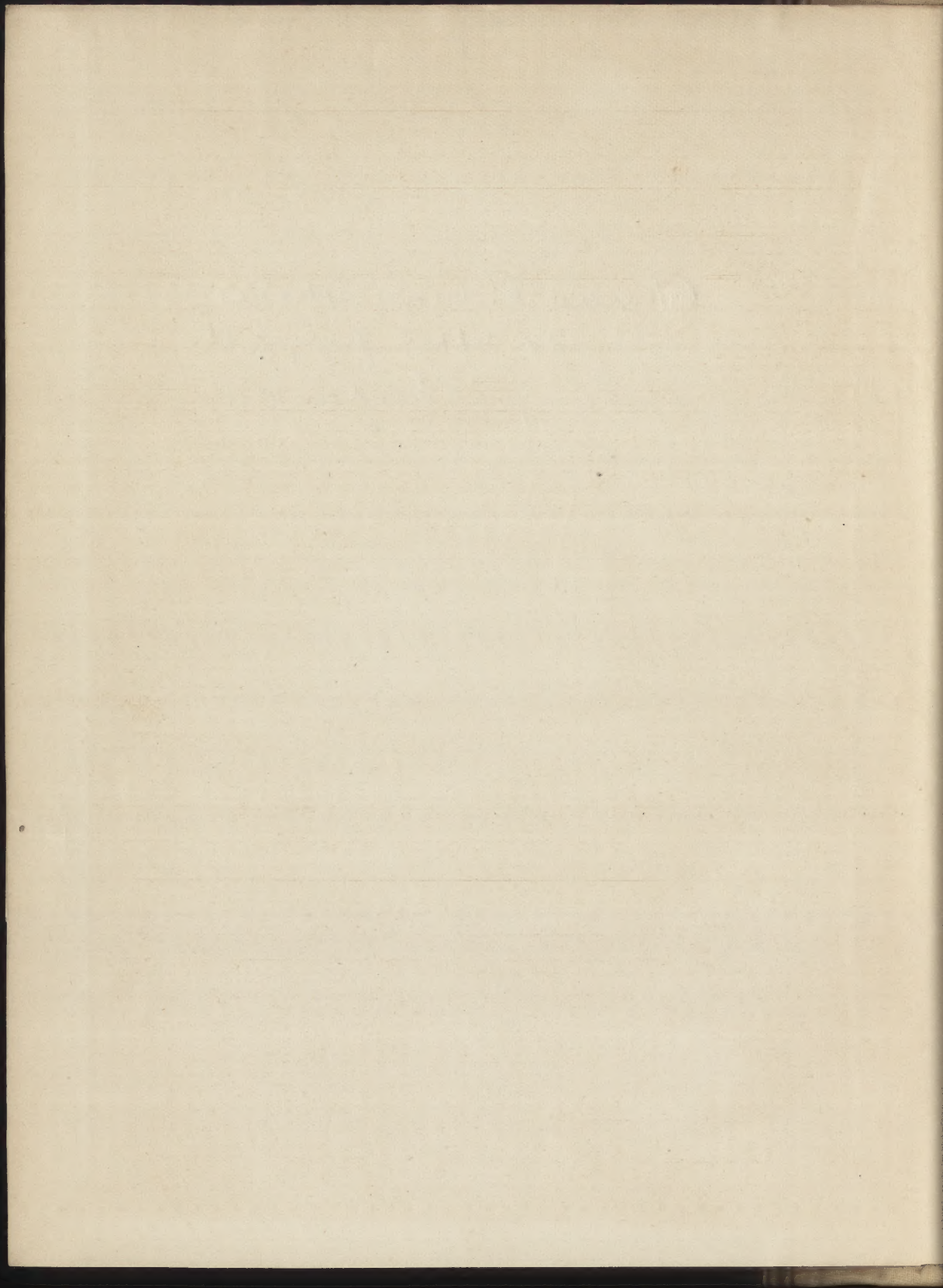
By C. J. HOLMES

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BY C. J. HOLMES

LONDON MDCCCCI
AT THE SIGN OF THE UNICORN

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EDINBURGH: PRINTED BY MORRISON AND GIBB LIMITED

P R E F A C E

LESLIE'S admirable biography must always remain the great authority on Constable's personal history, yet no book, however accurate and sympathetic, which dates from the forties, could foresee the enormous change which has taken place in landscape painting since Constable's death. Whatever his responsibility for the artistic revolution with which his name is associated, Constable undoubtedly stands at the parting of the ways between the old masters and the moderns, for he was the first to prove that a landscape might be a good picture, and also be really like nature. The aim of his great predecessors had been to make noble compositions, with just as much resemblance to nature as was convenient. The aim of his successors has been to get a sincere likeness to nature, while pictorial quality seems too often to be regarded as a subordinate matter.

Since the excellence of Leslie's work renders any lengthy detailed biography unnecessary, the main facts of Constable's life are here dealt with in a short introduction, while the chief part of this little book has been devoted to supplementing Leslie on the technical side by tracing Constable's connection with his predecessors, by describing the development of his painting, and by giving a brief account of the evolution of Modern Landscape in England and on the Continent.

I have to thank Mr. G. A. Phillips for kindly allowing me to reproduce the charming picture in his possession, and Mr. Augustin Rischgitz, whose beautiful photographs, specially made for this work from a series of Constable's sketches at South Kensington, form the greater part of the illustrations.

CHELSEA, *January* 1901.

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF KING CHARLES THE FIRST

BY SAMUEL JOHNSON

IN TEN VOLUMES

LONDON: Printed by A. MILLAR, in Pall-mall, 1764.

Vol. I.

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INTRODUCTION

CONSTABLE's father, Golding Constable, came of an old Yorkshire family which had been settled in Suffolk for two generations. By inheritance, by marriage, and by purchase he had, in course of time, become the owner of a considerable amount of property, including Flatford Mill, which stands just above the tidal waters of the Stour, a water-mill at Dedham, and two windmills at East Bergholt. Near this village he built for himself the house in which his second son John was born on 11th June 1776. This house was pulled down many years ago, and exists only on Constable's canvas. An engraving by Lucas, from one of his numerous sketches of it, forms the frontispiece to his "English Landscape Scenery." Several other views of the house may be seen in the room devoted to Constable's work at South Kensington.

Though delicate as an infant, John Constable grew up into a healthy child, and afterwards became remarkable for good looks and physical strength. He was first sent to a boarding school not very far from his home at the age of seven; was transferred later to an establishment in the pretty, little town of Lavenham, where he suffered much at the hands of a flogging usher; and finally went to the Grammar School at Dedham, where he remained till he was about seventeen years old. Here his fondness for painting became noticeable, and was treated with indulgence by the headmaster. Though he acquired a fair knowledge of Latin, he was not a brilliant scholar, and was remarkable chiefly for his fine penmanship. At home he practised painting from nature in company with John Dunthorne, a plumber and glazier, an ingenious and original man, who shared the boy's enthusiasm for art. As in the case of Crome, who, as a boy, was apprenticed for seven years to a coach, house, and sign painter, this early acquaintance with men who used paint in the broadest and simplest manner was doubtless of much use in saving Constable from any pettiness or timidity in the handling of pigment.

As a practical man Golding Constable could not help seeing that painting was not a remunerative profession, and, since his son displayed no inclination for taking orders, it was settled that he should become a miller. With that end in view, the young man worked for a year in his father's mills. However, while thus engaged he made the acquaintance of Sir George Beaumont, whose mother lived at Dedham, and saw for the first time Sir George's favourite Claude—the little "Landscape with

figures," now in the National Gallery (No. 61)—which impressed him deeply. Sir George also owned a small collection of drawings by Girtin, which he advised Constable to study. The young man's passion for art increased with time, though he was exact in performing his duties as a miller, till Golding Constable consented to his visiting London with the view of ascertaining his prospects as a professional painter.

He was furnished with a letter of introduction to Joseph Farington, R.A., whose name is now only remembered on account of the coloured aquatints after his landscape drawings which are common objects in curiosity shops. Though Farington was not himself a great artist, having most of the mannerisms of his master Wilson and few of his excellences, he was sufficiently open-minded to be able to recognise the young man's originality, and informed him that his style of landscape would some day form a distinct feature in the art. Constable also made the acquaintance of "Antiquity" Smith, the biographer of the sculptor Nollekens, who gave him much sound advice. He corresponded freely with Smith during the next few years, chiefly on matters relating to art; and in 1797, when his prospects of painting seemed worse than uncertain, we find him writing:

"I must now take your advice and attend to my father's business, as we are likely soon to lose an old servant (our clerk), who has been with us eighteen years; and now I see plainly it will be my lot to walk through life in a path contrary to that in which my inclination would lead me."

Nevertheless, two years later, before he was twenty-three years old, he had given up business for ever, and become a student at the Royal Academy. Judging from his letters to Dunthorne, he seems at first to have devoted most of his time to copying the works of the old masters, with the intention of acquiring a skill in execution which would enable him to face nature more boldly. In 1800 he writes that he is working from nature in Helmingham Park, about ten miles north of Ipswich; and in 1801 he paid a visit to Derbyshire. In 1801 he exhibited for the first time at the Academy. He had been greatly helped in his work by the advice and encouragement of the President, Benjamin West, who now did him a still greater service by preventing him from accepting a drawing-mastership which had been offered him. A year later Constable went in an East Indiaman from London to Deal. On the voyage he executed a large number of sketches, which, owing to a hurried departure, he left on board ship. Ultimately he had the good luck to recover them, and they gave him material for several of his exhibited works. In 1805 he spent two months in the Lake District, where, if one may judge from his sketch-books, he seems to have been chiefly impressed by the lower end of Borrowdale. During the next few years he made the acquaintance of Stothard, Wilkie, and Jackson, an acquaintance that ripened into a lifelong friendship; while his technical powers were notably improved by a commission from the Earl of Dysart to copy a number of family pictures, chiefly by Sir Joshua Reynolds. A time of trial, however, was in store for the artist which prevented this improvement from having much immediate effect upon his prospects.

In 1800, during one of his visits to Suffolk, Constable had made the acquaintance of a little girl, the granddaughter of Dr. Rhudde, the rector of Bergholt, and daughter of Charles Bicknell, Solicitor to the Admiralty. This acquaintance by the year 1811 had ripened into a warmer attachment, which met with active opposition from the lady's relatives. Dr. Rhudde was not on good terms with Golding Constable, and objected, not altogether without reason, to the limited means and uncertain prospects of the young painter. Mr. Bicknell does not seem to have opposed the union so strongly, but he did not wish his daughter to be disinherited by her grandfather, who was very rich, and so was bound to side with Dr. Rhudde.

The correspondence of the two lovers as given by Leslie should be read *in extenso* by all who are interested in Constable's personality, and is of no little interest as a human document. It is amusing to contrast the two young people. The artist is ardent, hopes and despairs alternately, turns for a time to portrait-painting as a means of making money, but is always intent upon bringing matters to a climax. Maria Bicknell's attachment is of a more sober and practical kind; her sentiments are the sentiments of a young lady who has been well brought up, and takes a quite proper view of filial duty and the discomforts of love in a cottage. "Indeed, my dear John," she writes on one occasion, "people cannot live now on four hundred a year—it is a bad subject, and therefore adieu to it." And again, when Dr. Rhudde found out by accident that Mr. Bicknell was allowing Constable to pay occasional visits to his house: "The Doctor has just sent such a letter that I tremble with having heard part of it read. Poor dear papa, to have such a letter written to him! He has a great share of feeling, and it has sadly hurt him . . . I am sure your heart is too good not to feel for my father. He would wish to make us all happy if he could. Pray do not come to town just yet." What a picture Miss Austen might have drawn of poor Mr. Bicknell's dilemma between his daughter's happiness and his father-in-law's money!

The Gordian knot was cut in 1816 by Constable's friend, Archdeacon Fisher, who brought matters to a crisis. Miss Bicknell's answer to Constable's proposal is characteristic: "Papa is averse to everything I propose. If you please, you may write to him; it will do neither good nor harm. I hope we are not going to do a very foolish thing . . . Once more and for the last time it is not too late to follow papa's advice and *wait* . . . Notwithstanding all I have been writing, whatever you deem best I do. This enchanting weather gives one spirits." There can be little doubt as to the tenor of Constable's reply. The two were accordingly married by the Archdeacon at St. Martin's Church on 2nd October 1816, and went down after the wedding to stay with him at his vicarage of Osmington, near Weymouth.

Archdeacon Fisher, the eldest son of Dr. Fisher, Master of the Charterhouse, had become Constable's greatest friend, though sixteen years his junior. He was chaplain to his uncle, the Bishop of Salisbury, and spared neither his influence nor his purse to help the struggling artist. His letters show him to have been gifted with unusual knowledge, taste, and enthusiasm in matters of art, and also as a man of an

affectionate nature and sound common sense. He was the first really to appreciate Constable's art, and to show his appreciation in a practical form ; while it would be hard to overpraise his tact and tenderness in times of trouble.

During the last two years of his courtship Constable met with trouble enough, apart from the anxieties arising from the uncertainty of success in his profession. He lost his mother in the spring of 1815, and his father about a year later. The death of his mother was an especially heavy blow to his affectionate nature. She had not only done all she could to bring his courtship to a successful issue, but had continued to encourage his artistic efforts, when his professional prospects seemed most desperate. In 1811, after the British Institution had bought a picture of Benjamin West's for £3000, she writes to her son : " In truth, my dear John, though in all human probability my head will be laid low long ere it comes to pass, yet, with my present light, I can perceive no reason why you should not, one day, with diligence and attention, be the performer of a picture worth £3000." Eighty years after her death this fond wish was more than realised when Constable's *Stratford Mill* fetched nearly £9000 at the Huth sale.

The young married couple lived for the next few years at a small house, No. 1 Keppel Street, Russell Square, where their two eldest children, John and Maria, were born. In 1819 Constable's anxieties were lessened by the receipt of his share (£4000) of his father's property, while Mrs. Constable inherited a similar amount from her grandfather Dr. Rhudde. How much his professional reputation had increased may be judged from the fact that he was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy towards the end of the year. His art was never more perfect than at this period, but his pictures did not sell readily ; and though Archdeacon Fisher bought *The White Horse* and *Stratford Mill*, Constable was still unable to regard his landscape work as a certain source of income—even three years later we find him writing to his friend for the loan of twenty or thirty pounds. In 1822, however, he moved into a larger house, 35 Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square, which had belonged to Joseph Farington, R.A., whom he had consulted twenty-seven years earlier as to his chance of success as a painter. The move had become almost a necessity, as his family had been increased by the birth of a son and a daughter (Charles and Isabel), and the artist needed more room for his painting. In the autumn of 1823 he spent more than a month with Sir George Beaumont at Coleorton Hall—the longest time he ever spent apart from his wife and children. A year later, after long negotiations, two of his large pictures, one of them being *The Haywain*, now in the National Gallery, were exhibited in the Louvre. Here their merit and originality were soon recognised ; they were removed to places of honour, they raised a storm of discussion in the papers, and finally, when Charles x. visited the Exhibition, they gained the artist a gold medal. In the following year he won a similar distinction at Lille with his *White Horse* ; and in November his third son Alfred was born. Alfred Constable, who inherited something of his father's artistic taste, was drowned by the upsetting of a boat at Goring, when he had just completed his twenty-seventh year. In 1827 Constable moved to Well Walk,

Hampstead, and we find him writing to Fisher: "So hateful is moving about to me that I could gladly exclaim, 'Here let me take my everlasting rest!' . . . This house is to my wife's heart's content, it is situated on an eminence at the back of the spot in which you saw us, and our little drawing-room commands a view unsurpassed in Europe—from Westminster Abbey to Gravesend. The Dome of St. Paul's in the air seems to realise Michelangelo's words on seeing the Pantheon, 'I will build such a thing in the sky.'"

Hampstead

Shortly after their move to Hampstead (2nd January 1829) Constable's fourth son Lionel was born. The painter's anxieties as to the future of his family were removed about the same time by a legacy of £20,000 from Mr. Bicknell. Mrs. Constable, however, had been unwell for some time, and her illness now became serious. Symptoms of consumption developed, and she died towards the end of the year. Her death was a terrible blow to her husband, who wore mourning for the rest of his life. Even his election to full membership of the Academy did not revive his spirits. "It has been delayed," he said, "till I am solitary and cannot impart it." Thus when calling, in accordance with custom, to pay his respects to the President, he intimated to Lawrence that his admission was an act of justice rather than of favour; and a month or two later he writes to Leslie: "Can you tell me whether I ought to send it (his *Hadleigh Castle*) to the Exhibition? I am grievously nervous about it, as *I am still smarting under my election*." His resentment was not wholly unnatural, for he was in his fifty-third year.

1829 & Mrs C.

The next few years of his life were made busy by the duties inseparable from the membership of the Selection Committee and as visitor of the Life Class. He was also much occupied with the engraving of the plates in his "English Landscape"—an undertaking of which he bore the cost, and which proved a failure from the first. Towards the end of 1831 Constable was taken seriously ill, and the depression consequent upon his weak health was not lessened by the knowledge that he must shortly lose his assistant John Dunthorne, the son of his friend at East Bergholt. Poor young Dunthorne died in November 1832. Two months earlier Constable lost his constant friend and patron Archdeacon Fisher. In 1833 the painter delivered a lecture in the Assembly Room at Hampstead, with the title "An Outline of the History of Landscape Painting." In the spring of the following year Constable suffered once more from an attack of acute rheumatism. In the summer he visited a namesake and patron, Mr. George Constable, at Arundel, and was greatly charmed with the castle and the splendid scenery round it. In the autumn he paid a visit to Lord Egremont at Petworth, with its magnificent collection of pictures. In May and June 1836 he delivered four lectures on Landscape at the Royal Institution, and in July he lectured at Hampstead to the Literary and Scientific Institution on the same subject. During these last years Constable seems to have devoted himself to his art more entirely than ever, though the starting of two of his sons in life also occupied his attention. John, the eldest, did not long survive his father: wishing to take orders, he went to Cambridge, but died of scarlet fever, caught while studying medicine in a hospital. Charles Constable, the second son, who inherited

1831

Health poor

Lectures

much of his father's artistic talent, went to sea about a year before his father's death, entered the East India Company's service, and retired at length with the rank of Commander.

d. 1837.
Constable's health had long been far from satisfactory, though, in spite of his sedentary habits, he retained to the last an unusually youthful appearance, and his sudden death on the evening of 31st March 1837 could only be traced to a severe attack of indigestion. Nevertheless, as he himself had observed long before, the nervousness of his temperament was wont to react strongly upon his physical nature. He was never really a happy man after the death of his wife, so that when the attack came it fell upon a constitution that had long been undermined. He was buried at Hampstead in the vault in the south-east corner of the churchyard, which contained the remains of his wife, under a tablet bearing the inscription by which he had commemorated her loss :

Eheu, quam tenui a filo pendet
Quidquid in vita maxime arridet.

Before Constable's pictures were dispersed a subscription was raised by his friends and admirers, with the result that *The Cornfield* was purchased and presented to the National Gallery, where it now hangs.

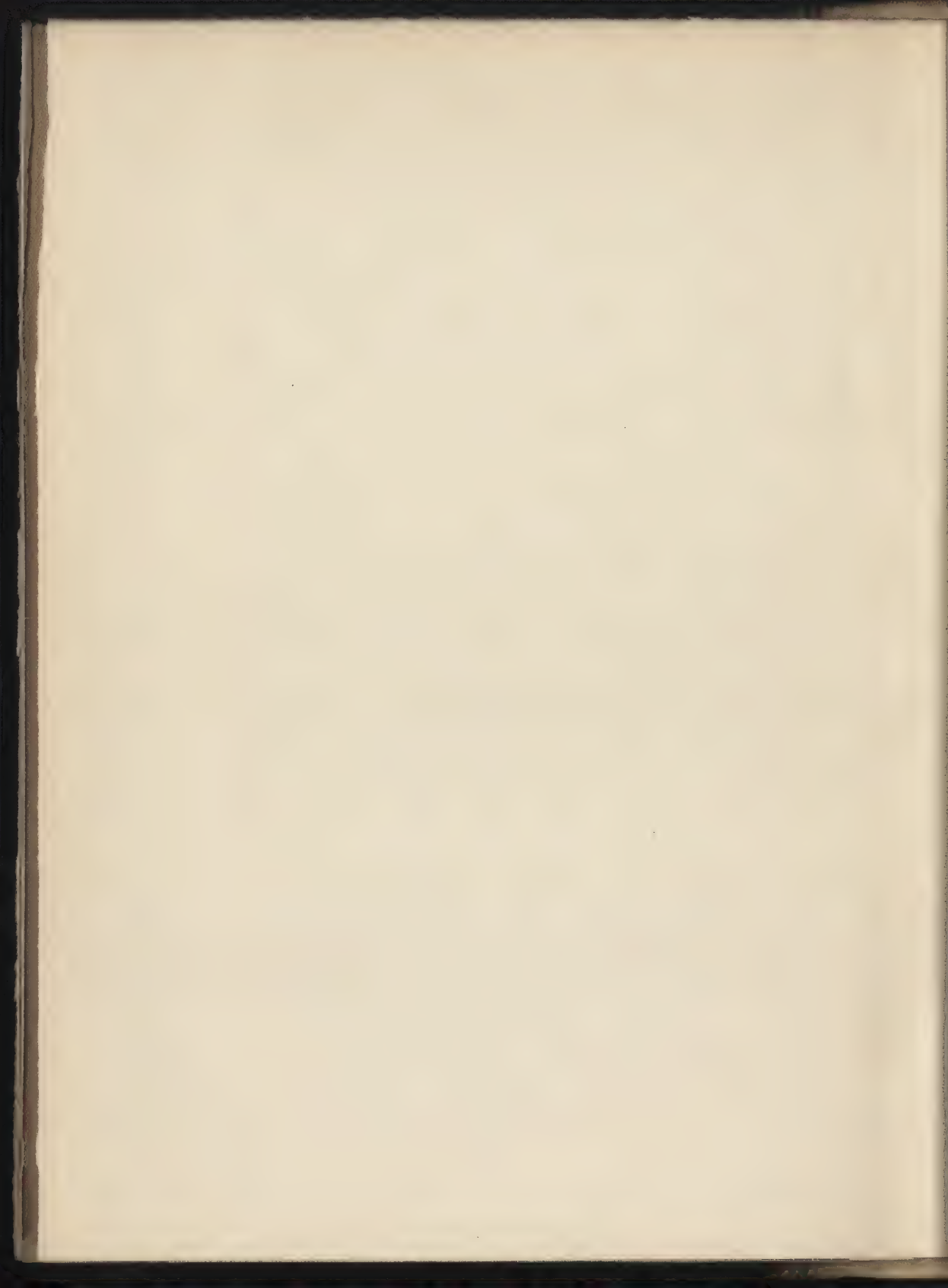
In a short abstract such as this it is impossible to give a fair impression of the painter's character, of the simplicity and earnestness of his nature, of the kindness of his heart, and the sense of humour which together served to gain the affection of those with whom he came in contact, even more than his enthusiasm for his art, and the patience, originality, and skill with which he practised it. In Leslie's delightful pages Constable the man is revealed as clearly as Constable the painter, and it is difficult to say which of the two is the more attractive. Somewhat undue stress has been laid upon Constable's reputed poverty, and the want of appreciation with which his painting was received. As a young man Constable certainly may not have been rich, but he was never reduced to any desperate straits, and later by various bequests inherited nearly £30,000. If his art was too original to command the ready sale which attends the commercial painter who has learned to paint down to the level of the public, he was at least admired and respected by a fair number of his brother-artists, he was a regular exhibitor at the Academy, and his success on the Continent was sufficiently spontaneous and remarkable to have satisfied any ambition. That the impression he left on his contemporaries was not that of the anxious, dispirited man, whom the letters not infrequently reveal, may be judged from the number of anecdotes that survive of his general good temper and sense of humour. Of these only one can be quoted. An artist complained in the hall of the Royal Academy of the way in which his picture had been hung ; and when Constable and Leslie went down to pacify him he began to accuse some of the members of jealousy, adding, "I cannot but feel as I do, for painting is a passion with me." "Yes," replied Constable, "and a bad passion."

The few quotations of Constable's words included in this brief notice give but

a faint idea of the natural charm of his style. Had his taste not lain in other directions, he might, I think, have occupied a distinguished place among the masters of English prose, and his simple eloquence is never seen to better advantage than when he is describing the subjects of his sketches.

The enormous, and in many respects well deserved, reputation of Ruskin compels a brief note on his attacks upon Constable, which, as he himself admitted, were called forth by Leslie's affectionate admiration. Such resentment may explain, but does not excuse, the utter injustice of his remarks upon one whom he regarded as a possible rival of Turner. He writes, for instance: "Unteachableness seems to have been a main feature of his character, and there is corresponding want of veneration for Nature herself. His early education and associations were also against him; they induced in him a morbid preference of subjects of a low order." And again: "Constable perceives in a landscape that the grass is wet, the meadows flat, and the boughs shady; that is to say, about as much as, I suppose, might be apprehended between them by an intelligent fawn and a skylark. Turner perceives at a glance the whole sum of visible truth open to human intelligence." The modesty of the last sentence indicates sufficiently the writer's sense of proportion and lack of prejudice. Three lines later he classes Constable with Berghem!

As to Constable's unteachableness, it is impossible to have two opinions when one knows his work. He was all his life a devout student of the old masters, he learned to paint by copying and imitating them, and in his lectures on Landscape he speaks of them always with all possible sympathy, affection, and respect. To accuse him of want of veneration for Nature is even more absurdly false, and may be best answered in Constable's own words. In the course of the last of his lectures on Landscape, delivered the year before his death, he says: "The young painter who, regardless of present popularity, would leave a name behind him, must become the patient pupil of Nature. . . . The landscape painter must walk in the fields with a humble mind. No arrogant man was ever permitted to see Nature in all her beauty. If I may be allowed to use a very solemn quotation, I would say most emphatically to the student, 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.'"



CONSTABLE AND HIS PREDECESSORS

NEARLY three quarters of a century have elapsed since Constable's death. During that period his reputation has increased enormously, not only because there has been time for his artistic powers to be fairly appraised, but also because he is generally recognised as the parent of modern landscape. So far has this feeling been carried that there is even a tendency to speak as if Constable's aim was practically the same as that of our contemporary painters ; as if his departure from the tradition of the old masters was final and absolute. Several of the artist's sayings might be quoted in support of such a theory. Nevertheless in the admirable Lectures on Landscape, delivered towards the close of his life, and therefore, it may be presumed, representing his mature thoughts on the subject, Constable shows a remarkable acquaintance with the spirit and technical methods of his fore-runners, and a no less remarkable reverence for the results they obtained. The influence of the past, however, is not apparent, at first sight, in his large pictures, for they are undeniably modern in outward aspect. Yet, if his achievement is considered in chronological sequence, a definite connection with older traditions seems to become more and more visible ; till at last one begins to feel as if that connection was the real secret of Constable's success. Before entering upon such an inquiry, it is necessary to understand quite clearly what the ancient tradition of landscape was.

When the revival of the arts in Europe had progressed so far that painters were no longer content to set their figures against a background of gilding or flat colour, the effort to represent persons in their natural surroundings brought landscape into existence. In the work of the primitives of Italy and the Low Countries we are constantly meeting with delicate renderings of

natural fact—a trim town, a green meadow, woods and waters unstirred by the wind, a distant blue peak, and, almost always, a space of liquid air beyond. Yet the landscape element is kept strictly subordinate to the main matter of the picture, both in tone, colour, and proportion, while the technical treatment is as simple and precise as that employed for the figures. This held good right up to the end of the fifteenth century. Then the conditions are occasionally reversed, and figure-painting with a landscape background develops into the landscape with figures. Thus in the work of Titian, who was the first great master to cultivate both branches of the art side by side, we find landscape and figures treated alike, without any radical difference in technique.

The method of Titian, which consisted of a first solid painting (probably tempera) of a broad and simple kind, followed by elaborate glazes with transparent or semi-transparent pigment, was admirably adapted for the breadth of mass and richness of colour at which he aimed. Being a thoroughly professional painter, he realized exactly the limitations and advantages of a method which enabled him to reduce his interpretations of natural effect to the unity of tone which had already become a recognised condition of pictorial success; and if his Italian successors and imitators carried the reduction to the point of dullness, he can hardly be held responsible for their failure.

Certain foreigners, at any rate, understood him better. The influence of Velasquez upon landscape has been slight, because his landscapes are few in number, and their beauty is not of an obtrusive order. The genius of Rubens was less modest. The *Autumn* in our National Gallery will serve to show how he introduced many of the qualities which he admired in Titian, into the oil-method characteristic of his own countrymen. The shadows which hold the composition together are painted thinly in rich brown upon a luminous ground, and into them while still moist the lights and half lights are swept with a touch that is free to audacity, and with a most skilfully varied impasto. The scheme of colour retains more than a hint of his Flemish origin, though the hues are dexterously broken and interchanged, and harmonized at the last by a strong warm glaze. This tradition was altered but slightly by the suave accomplishment of Van Dyck, and passed into English art through the gentle genius of Gainsborough.

With some few variations, the method is the same as that employed by Rembrandt in early and middle life, the principal difference being the larger proportion of shadow employed by the great Dutchman. Rembrandt's countrymen, however, were too ardently naturalistic to be content with a system which forced nature to be ever ablaze with autumnal russet, or the glow of a golden afternoon. The *Landscape with Tobias and the Angel* at Trafalgar Square, and Lord Lansdowne's noble *Mill*, are proof enough that Rembrandt was not blind to the silver twilight that follows the sunset; but Ruysdael was the first to make a regular study of the most characteristic aspect of northern scenery—steep roofs of weathered tiles among heavy green trees, and overhead a grey cloudy sky.

The change in technique that ensued was a necessity rather than an accident. The method of Rubens was essentially transparent, and transparency implies warmth. To obtain coolness, the Dutch painters used pigments that were at least partially opaque. The method of Rubens compelled the painter to work swiftly; he might interpret detail, but could not copy it. The Dutchmen wished to copy detail, and so had to prepare a solid underpainting with which any small addition could be blended and harmonized. The method of Rubens derived much of its glow and luminosity from a free use of warm glazes. The Dutchmen painted local colours solidly upon the monochrome sketch, and, as a rule, did not depend upon strong glazes. In other respects pictorial practice was unaltered; so that the difference between the style of Rubens and Ruysdael is not a radical difference. Both obtain unity by the use of a general shadow colour which pervades the whole picture. In Rubens this is warm and transparent, in Ruysdael it is cooler and semi-opaque. Rubens painted quickly into his shadows while wet, getting great variety of texture by a skilful use of strong impasto, and relying upon a rich glaze, when all was dry, to set the colour right. Ruysdael painted more drily, more slowly, more smoothly. He was thus able to match his colours at leisure, to alter them where incorrect, and needed only a thin general glaze at the last, to bring up the quality of his painting.

This manner of working is practically identical with that employed by Claude, but Claude's spirit and subject-matter were widely different from those of the Dutchmen. The Carracci and

Domenichino were content with an empty landscape formula, based on imperfect understanding of the romantic side of Titian's genius. Claude inherited this formula, and transformed it into a pleasing artificial poetry. The secret of his taste was a passionate admiration of Italy, not only for the purity of her air, the brightness of her sunshine, the shapeliness of her trees and mountains, the extent of her plains, or the clearness of her sea, but more than all for the fallen columns, the shattered walls, and the crumbling arches that recalled her glorious history. Founding his art upon the dull tradition of the Eclectics, he made the masses graceful, filled void spaces with appropriate detail, drew trees that had some resemblance to the trees of nature, painted a sea that could glitter with waves that actually seemed to splash, and spread over all a sky that was like a real sky—no convenient conventional twilight, but veritable day, with a warm sun in full view.

His sketches are even fresher and more natural than his paintings, and show how large a store of charming material he found time to amass. It must always be a matter for regret that the example of his predecessors, though it could not stifle his love of nature, was strong enough to fetter it with the formal ideals of the Grand Style. Hence come the ill-drawn patriarchs, the weak-knee'd heroes, the brickfaced nymphs, and pinchbeck architecture that are dragged in to dignify scenes upon which their presence is the one obvious blot.

Of the landscape of Gaspar Poussin and Salvator Rosa it is unnecessary to speak at length, since their method differs but slightly from that of Claude. Their touch was heavier than his, their paint was thicker and less translucent, they often worked on dark red grounds, they preferred abrupt or rugged forms, sharp oppositions of light and shadow, with rolling storm-clouds, to his gentle graceful outlines, delicate gradations of tone, and perfect serenity of summer air, but in all essentials they may be classed with him. The spirit of their work was infected, like his, with the poisonous tradition that landscape was a branch of historical painting, and the disease thus induced made further progress in the art impossible.

So lasting were its effects that our first great landscape painter, Richard Wilson, was unable to shake it off. His work, with all its poetry, its skill, its refinement, is too often marred by the

obtrusion of some classical story that turns all to artifice. The criticism of the *Apollo and Niobe* by Reynolds proves that this was felt even in Wilson's lifetime, for Sir Joshua contrasts, just as a modern might do, the practice of introducing heroic figures into realistic landscapes, with the proper and natural use of rustic figures by Gainsborough.

Gainsborough was the first to free English landscape from the incubus of the historical tradition. Nowadays we may not find in his landscapes that "portrait-like representation of nature" which Reynolds found there, for the clouds and trees and the life of the country-side appear to us only through the veil of an exquisite artistic temperament, which passes over all that might be hard or ugly or inharmonious. In early life Gainsborough painted the oak with skill and truth, but in his mature work all except the figures and animals was generalized and idealized. The colour is so splendid, the touch so free and delicate, that the spectator cannot fail to be enchanted, though in his inmost heart he may know all the time that the deep tones of the sky, the glow and the swing of the warm foliage, are merely masterpieces of magnificent convention and like nothing that ever was upon the face of the earth.

Gainsborough and Wilson were not the only painters of the eighteenth century who helped to restore the dignity of landscape. The pioneers of water-colour drawing made no attempt to arrive at the full rendering of the hues of nature, which was the aim of the revolution effected by Turner and Cox; yet it is wonderful how much they were able to render with their apparently scanty means. Water-colour is generally recognised as the medium by which atmospheric effects are most readily and easily suggested, and a limited scale of tone and colour only emphasizes this merit, as one sees in such drawings as those of J. R. Cozens. In spite of the poverty of his materials and an obvious lack of sound training, the vast serenity of dawn or of nightfall is expressed in his work with amazing directness and simplicity. His pale sketches are free alike from the charming unreality of Gainsborough and the sham heroics of Wilson, recalling with continuous iteration those lonely places on which one chances at twilight, where the utter silence is almost terrible. I have mentioned Cozens particularly, not only because he was the most remarkable water-colour painter working in

Gainsborough

Infl. of Cozens
on Gainsborough

England before Constable's time, but also because Constable himself speaks of his drawings in a manner that leaves no doubt of the great influence they had upon him; indeed, in a moment of enthusiasm he goes so far as to call Cozens "the greatest genius that ever touched landscape."

Thus, at the time of Constable's birth, while art on the Continent had practically ceased to exist, there were three distinct schools of landscape-painting in England to guide a rising artist. The classical tradition had been ably sustained by the refined taste and majestic genius of Wilson; the princely realism of Rubens had turned to delicate romance in the hands of Gainsborough; while water-colour, though still in its childhood, was already giving indications of its capacity.

Thirty years later, before Constable had finished his professional apprenticeship, all was changed. Turner had given the classical landscape a new lease of life with *The Garden of the Hesperides*, had eclipsed all previous painting of the sea with his *Calais Pier*, and was carrying forward the development of water-colour drawing from the point where his friend Girtin had left it. James Ward, Cotman, Morland and Barker of Bath had done sound work on the lines of the landscape and cattle painters of the Netherlands, but the advance that they made upon their predecessors was small compared with the extraordinary perfection attained in the same style by John Crome. Indeed, with Crome and the youthful Turner the landscape method of the old masters reached a pitch of sustained excellence unknown to Titian or Claude, perhaps even to Rubens and Rembrandt, at the very moment when, all the world over, it was to be superseded. Almost a century has passed since then, yet there is hardly a sign of any reaction from the change effected in the art of Europe by the example of Constable.

The ancient tradition of landscape was invariably founded on chiaroscuro, to which a suggestion of reality was given by the addition of a moderate amount of local colour. To supply an interest comparable in some degree to that aroused by figure-painting, landscapes were either peopled with historical or mythological figures, or were animated with striking atmospheric effects. Rembrandt and Claude proved that rustic life could provide material enough for admirable sketches, but the work of the lesser Dutchmen showed that average country scenery was by

itself an inadequate motive for elaborate oil-painting. Gainsborough and Crome, it is true, made charming pictures out of very simple subjects, but they are made charming by art, and not by sincere imitation of nature.

The case of Turner is somewhat different. Turner all his life held to the ideals of the riper old masters, that is to say, his primary object was the making of splendid pictorial compositions. His naturalism was essentially secondary to that main purpose, which in middle and late life resolved itself into studies in harmonized and contrasted colours. Nevertheless, his amazing memory, observation, and skill compelled him to use natural forms and sometimes natural colours, as his vehicles of expression; though he used them in quite an arbitrary way, and discarded them without hesitation, when there was a risk of their interfering with the scale or intensity of his effects.

Constable's attitude was the exact opposite of Turner's. Born and bred in the midst of fresh English fields and meadows, he was a sincere and devoted lover of nature before he became a lover of painting. Unlike many other painters who have been able to admire the things around them only through some resemblance, real or fanciful, to the pictures they have been accustomed to reverence, Constable saw from the first that the art of Italy or the Netherlands was not like the Dedham Valley, and that if he was to paint the elms and streams and sky which he loved, he could not do so by giving them the colour and appearance of distant countries which he had never seen. Thus, when he came to study the old masters, he did so with an unbiassed mind. Claude and Ruysdael could not teach him anything about Suffolk scenery that he did not already know, but they could teach him a great deal about something of which he was entirely ignorant—a sound way of constructing pictures—and Constable never forgot the lesson.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSTABLE'S ART

BEFORE discussing Constable's pictures in detail, a few words are necessary as to the collections in which his work is accessible to students. London is so lucky in this respect that it is hardly possible to form a complete idea of his achievement in any other place. The comparative lack of appreciation with which Constable met during the greater part of his career has been less unfortunate for posterity than it was for the artist himself. At his death he left his family a large number of pictures and studies representing every stage of his artistic activity, and many of these, by the generous bequest of his daughter, Miss Isabel Constable, passed into our public collections some ten years ago. Several of his most important pictures had already become the property of the nation, by the gift or bequest of their former owners, so that, altogether, quite a large proportion of Constable's work can be seen and studied in the London galleries. As a matter of practical convenience, it is to such pictures that reference will usually be made. Not only do they illustrate the various phases of Constable's art far more completely than private collections, but they have the advantage of being always accessible, so that any questions relating to them can be settled on the spot.

Of these public collections, that in South Kensington Museum is the most complete and interesting, though the paintings and studies are huddled together without any regard either for sequence or decorative effect. In addition to *Salisbury Cathedral*, *The Cottage in a Cornfield*, *Boat-building*, and other important finished pictures, the Kensington Museum possesses the two magnificent six-foot sketches for *The Leaping Horse* and *The Haywain*, and several hundred studies in oil, water-colour, and pencil, many of great beauty and interest. The Diploma Gallery

in Burlington House contains *A Lock*, *The Leaping Horse*, and sixteen small studies in oil. The National Gallery owns *The Cornfield*, *The Haywain*, *The Valley Farm*, *The Cenotaph*, *The Glebe Farm*, and about a dozen smaller works. Several of these were removed in 1897 to the Tate Gallery. In the Print Room of the British Museum there are some well-preserved water-colours, a number of excellent pencil studies, and two specimens of Constable's feeble attempts at etching. On the whole, even Turner is hardly so fully or so favourably represented in our public collections. Except where the contrary is expressly stated, the sketches mentioned in the following pages are to be found at South Kensington.

In the following pages I have attempted to trace Constable's progress by pictures and sketches that are at once representative and accessible. To attempt more would be beside the aim of the present series, and far beyond its scope. Viewed broadly, Constable's painting divides naturally into three periods: 1776-1805, 1806-1826, and from 1827 to the year of his death, 1837. The divisions, especially those between the second and third periods, are marked by no hard-and-fast line, but they are quite clear enough to serve as a base for practical classification. Constable's methods and style varied very greatly with circumstances of time and intention, so that to the inexperienced eye late work will have sometimes the finish and severity of a student, and *vice versâ*. Nevertheless, upon longer acquaintance, it is quite possible to date a sketch with approximate correctness, so steady is the growth of the artist's technical method and habit of mind.

1776-1805

THE work done by Constable before his thirtieth year need not detain us long. His artistic career began much later than is usual with professional painters, and, judging from the specimens we have of his early work, it is not surprising that his aspirations should have met with but little encouragement from his relatives and friends. The four pen-drawings of cottages at South Kensington, dated 1796, are hardly the kind of thing one expects from a young man of twenty who proposes to take up art seriously. Three years later he became a student at the Academy, and worked hard at copying such pictures by recognised masters as he came across—Ruysdael, Annibale Carracci, Richard Wilson, Sir George Beaumont, Claude, and drawings by Girtin.

Our knowledge of Constable's earliest efforts would be practically *nil*, were it not for the collection of his son, Captain Charles Constable, which was exhibited by Messrs. Leggatt, of Cornhill, in December 1899. Besides a sketch-book containing quite childish pencil studies of Flatford Mill and neighbourhood, there were two or three pictures that must have been painted at the time of his first meeting with Sir George Beaumont. The earliest of all was a clumsy oil-painting of *East Bergholt Church*; the next a heavy dull view of *Fountains Abbey*—probably a copy from some fifth-rate English picture. The third in date, *The Harvest Field*, was more ambitious, being rather a complicated imitation of Gainsborough—all brown and hot yellow. He made an etching of this composition, which failed owing to insufficient biting. In a portfolio there was an elaborately stippled copy in sepia of a composition by Claude, dated 1795. Of all these works *The Harvest Field* alone shows any trace of feeling, skill, or invention, and except from the historical point of view they are of little

interest compared with the sketches at Kensington made during his Derbyshire tour in 1801, which show what a real advance Constable had made in the five years. Though still timid and deficient in contrast, the Derbyshire views are full of air and space, and have caught something of the loneliness of mountain scenery that Girtin knew so well. In spite of Benjamin West's kindly criticism on a rejected picture of Flatford, "Remember, young man, light and shade never stand still," Constable's work for some time remained rather heavy, as one can see from the sketch dated 1802 called *Landscape Evening*, which shows a decided leaning towards the tone and colour of Wilson. The upright sketch of Dedham Vale bearing the same date is more successful, and anticipates the fresh natural colour of his mature style. His drawings in water-colour and pencil are more evenly skilful—the sketches of Windsor, and Eton from the Castle terrace, for instance—though they are usually slight, and indicate rather varied influences. The sketches in imitation of Gainsborough probably belong to this period, while his marine studies of 1803 are evidently influenced by the Dutch sea painters.

Derbyshire
1801

In 1804 he painted an altar-piece for the church of Brantham in Suffolk, where it may still be seen, though it is not worth while going there to see it. It is little more than a feeble imitation of West's religious works, and shows that at the age of twenty-eight Constable was quite unable to paint a figure subject decently. Yet, if the little picture in the National Gallery, *On Barnes Common*, belongs to this period, as its Dutch technique would suggest, the artist was already showing in what direction his talent really lay. Constable is still a student, and a student of the old masters, but he has learned something about traditional methods of work. He knows how to model a grey cloudy sky in the manner of Ruysdael, and how to harmonize the cool green of foliage and grass with sober conventional brown, though a natural fondness for fresher tints flashes out now and then in the gay colour of some foreground figure, or where a gleam of sunlight strikes the white wall and red roof of a cottage.

The *Barnes Common* may serve to mark the close of Constable's period of definite studentship. The beginnings of that studentship had been unpromising enough. His timid imitations of Ruysdael's etching, his stippled copies of Claude, his clumsy experiments in the manner of Wilson and Gainsborough, gave

but little indication of genius, or even of exceptional talent. The visit to Derbyshire and his enthusiasm for Girtin had given him, at the age of twenty-five, a certain readiness in the use of water-colours, and some acquaintance with the simpler principles of landscape composition. During the next five years assiduous study and imitation of the old masters, more especially of Ruysdael, taught him much about the technique of oil-painting as applied to simple subjects and conventional effects. Thus at the beginning of his thirtieth year, though Constable could not be called an original artist, he had a very fair acquaintance with the tradition and practice of his art, and therefore a sound base for any experiments he wished to make in the future.

J. M. W. Turner
In fits of reaction from these technical labours Constable returned time after time to the study of the Dedham Valley. Indeed, in the constant alternation between art and nature his training bears some outward resemblance to that of Millet. Nevertheless, a great gulf really separates the two men. Constable's painting, in youth as in later life, is primarily inspired by a sincere affection for the actual objects and places he depicts. He regards them rather as things to be loved in themselves than as pictorial material to be disposed this way or that as an artist's taste or knowledge might suggest. Hence his tendency, in holding the balance between nature and art, is to an all-round compromise, and not to that abstraction and emphasis of particular facts which characterizes the best painting of Millet. Millet, thus, in spite of all his "local colour," is the property of the whole world. Constable remains the unique master of English rustic scenery.

1806-1826

THE water-colour of *A Bridge on the Stour* (apparently that above Flatford Lock) indicates that Constable had assimilated the grand manner of Girtin as thoroughly as the science of Ruysdael. The same influence is evident in several fine drawings of Bergholt Church, which also belong to the summer of 1806, though they have an air of movement and freshness that already marks a difference between the older master and the modern. How fast the gulf widened may be seen from the sketches made during a tour in the Lake District later in the year. Most of those at Kensington represent the scenery at the south end of Derwentwater—Lodore, Watendlath, Castlehead, Grange, the crags and fells of Borrowdale, with occasional glimpses of Thirlmere, and the Valley of St. John. In the solemn *View at Borrowdale*, here reproduced, it is easy to trace how Constable hankered after the freshness and glitter of his native water-meadows amid the heavy grandeur of the Cumberland hills. It was among these mountain solitudes that the real Constable first revealed himself. His studies show how great an impression this northern scenery made upon him, though its character was too stern, too remote from the gentler charms of his beloved Suffolk, to retain any lasting place in his affection.

During the next two years he exhibited several of his Cumberland drawings, yet he never seems to have completed any considerable picture from them. Most of the oil-sketches made on this tour are thinly and directly painted in fresh natural colour, without any reference to Dutch traditions of brown glazes and conventional arrangements of lines and masses. The largest work of this kind with which I am acquainted is the *Mountain Scene*, in the possession of Mr. Lionel Phillips, which measures

about 2 feet by 2 feet 6 inches. It is less successful, as a whole, than the smaller studies, and indicates that as yet Constable was unable to blend the bright realism of his sketches with the harmony of tone and colour that are needed to make a picture. Possibly this experiment may have shown him his weakness: at anyrate, during the next few years he went back to the study of the old masters with renewed earnestness. Even his method of sketching from nature was altered for a time. The little painting of *Sunset*, which dates from the early part of this reaction from naturalism, is laid in with solid pigment, more forcibly handled than in the Cumberland studies, and then toned into deeper harmony by a strong transparent glaze.

Much of his time during the two following years was spent in copying family portraits for Lord Dysart. Among these pictures at Hyde Park Corner were several works by Reynolds. The extraordinary influence that this communion with the older master had upon Constable may be judged from his altar-piece painted in 1809 for Nayland Church, where it may still be seen. The Brantham altar-piece, painted five years before, was ill drawn, crude in colour, and feebly painted. The Nayland picture, *Christ Blessing the Elements*, is freely and broadly treated in a scheme of deep liquid colour, toned with a rich warm glaze, which from the size and nature of the cracks must have contained a large proportion of asphaltum. The general appearance of the work, in fact, is far more like Lawrence than Constable. The figure is well posed, and the brushwork is clever, though rather loose in the head and hands. Judging from a rough scrawl in one of Constable's sketch-books, the size of the picture seems to have been reduced and its shape altered, when it was restored and set under glass in the reredos some twenty years ago.

To the same period we may assign the beautiful picture, *At East Bergholt, Suffolk—Dawn*, in the possession of Mr. G. A. Phillips. One might think it only an experiment in the manner of Gainsborough, were it not that the harmonies in warm brown and sober green which the older master handled so perfectly, are replaced by a cooler scheme of colour like that of a dusky aquamarine. The brushwork is swift and free, and no attempt is made to give a literal portrait of the Suffolk hillside with its trim hedges and scattered elms. All that we are shown is a vision of morning when the air is still dim with the mist that drifts up

slowly from the valleys to melt before the rising sun, which is still low down on the horizon; so that the trees cast only obscure shadows over the sloping fields. The impression left by this infinite space and solemnity makes one almost wish that Constable had never painted otherwise.

I have mentioned these pictures at some length, because they afford a clue to the great improvement in technical skill which was henceforward characteristic of Constable's work. He continued to accept commissions for copying and portrait-painting for some years, from the wish to make an income that would enable him to claim Miss Bicknell's hand, and at one time seems to have thought well of his chances of success; for in 1812 he writes that his portrait of the Rev. George Bridgman "far excels any of my former attempts in that way, and is doing me a great deal of service. My price for a head is fifteen guineas, and I am tolerably expeditious when I can have fair play at my sitter." At the close of the year his mother writes to him: "Fortune seems now to place the ball at your feet, and I trust you will not kick it from you. You now so greatly excel in portraits that I hope you will pursue a path the most likely to bring you fame and wealth, by which you can alone expect to obtain the object of your fondest wishes." However, the sale of two landscapes in 1814 seems to have decided Constable in clinging to the branch of his profession that he really liked, and from that time forward he made but occasional experiments in portrait-painting.

Nevertheless, the time he had spent on it was by no means ill spent. Portrait-painting is good practice for a landscape painter, both because it forces him to treat a simple subject with close attention, and because it is the branch of art which has the most sound and definite technical traditions. In this latter respect it was specially useful to Constable, who had hitherto approached nature with more enthusiasm than science. After 1810 that accusation could no longer be levelled against him. His science, of course, cannot be compared with the science of a Van Dyck or a Velasquez, but it was at least great enough to enable him to do readily what he wanted to do. Look, for example, at his two little pictures of Bergholt Churchyard—one at Kensington, and the other in the Tate Gallery—and note how the solemnity of the one, the pathos of the other, and exquisite colour in each, are got by the most simple straightforward painting. The fine oil-study,

Trees and Cottages (1812) (No. 324), and the *Sketch of a Cart and Horses* (1814), show an increasing love for fresh cool colour and stronger contrasts of light and dark, though the finished picture of *Boat-building*, exhibited in 1815, looks like the work of some English Cuyp, so sound is the technique, so delicate is the scheme of tone and colour, so serene is the brightness of the sunlit air. One would hardly imagine that it was painted later than the brilliant sketch engraved by Lucas under the title of "Spring," but in judging the dates of Constable's work one always finds that the style of his oil-sketches anticipates that of his finished pictures by several years.

The small pencil study of *Netley Abbey*, belonging to the year 1816, seems to have been used by Constable for one of the few etchings by him of which proofs still remain. He had experimented with etching in the days of his friendship with "Antiquity" Smith, but acquired little or no mastery of the medium. One print in the British Museum, apparently a scene near Salisbury, is quite respectable amateur's work; but the *Netley Abbey*, which must have been done at a time when his painting was strong and sound, is an utterly feeble and worthless production. Its defects, too, are not due to any failures in the biting, but are caused by ineffective design, and more than indifferent workmanship: nor is the failure unique. There are a couple of water-colours in the British Museum, and several drawings at Kensington (all bequeathed by Miss Constable), which indicate clearly that except in his oil-painting Constable was never on perfectly safe ground, and was always liable to turn out work that was utterly unworthy of a professional artist.

Constable was now in his fortieth year, and in his next decade produced much of his very finest painting. I regret that I have not here the space to deal with it in detail. In the year 1817 he exhibited the noble *Cottage in a Cornfield*, and the brilliant sketch of *A Cornfield*, now in the National Gallery. He also made the small studies in sepia (at Kensington) and in oils (at Burlington House) for *The Opening of Waterloo Bridge*. I think the sound and careful *Study of the Stem of an Elm Tree* belongs to this period. Though rather more skilful, its technique is remarkably like that of the *Flatford Mill* in the National Gallery, which is dated 1817. In the following year the exquisite little picture in the Tate Gallery, *The Salt Box*, was probably painted—a view looking

northwards from Hampstead Heath, where clouds flushed with warm sunlight sail gently over an expanse of silvery blue. The first of his large pictures, *The White Horse*, was exhibited at the Academy in 1819, and bought by Archdeacon Fisher. Constable's price was one hundred guineas, exclusive of the frame. In 1894 the picture fetched 6200 guineas. The composition is engraved by Lucas, but it cannot be regarded as one of his happiest efforts, though the great reduction in scale may perhaps be in part responsible for the worried look of the mezzotint. The little studies in oil of *The West End of Bergholt Church*, and *On the Stour near Dedham*, will serve as examples of the force and solidity with which Constable was working at this time.

His originality, if not his merit, now received some formal recognition, for at the close of the year 1819 he was elected to the Associateship of the Academy. For the Academy of 1820 he contributed the magnificent picture of *Stratford Mill*, of which Archdeacon Fisher again was the purchaser, at the price of one hundred guineas. At the Huth sale it fetched 8500 guineas. There is a good mezzotint of it by Lucas, on a large scale. Its companion in the 1820 Exhibition was the *Harwich Lighthouse*, now in the Tate Gallery. The *Stratford Mill* is so brilliant and powerful a work that it is hard to realize that the sober and heavy *Dedham Mill* at Kensington dates from the same year. The traces of Dutch technique seem to indicate that this latter picture must have been started at least four or five years earlier.

Some of Constable's best-known sketches were executed about this time. The noble mezzotints of Lucas have familiarized us with the desolate *Old Sarum*, the tremendous *Weymouth Bay* (perhaps identical with his *Osmington Shore*, exhibited at the British Gallery in 1819), and the solemn *Willy Lott's Cottage*. This last study illustrates admirably how much Constable could do with the simplest materials. The cottage itself still stands by the Stour just below Flatford Mill. It was used by the painter over and over again not only in small sketches but in large pictures, such as *The Haywain* and *The Valley Farm*. Willy Lott, after whom it is now named, lies buried in Bergholt churchyard, where his epitaph, recording that he lived all his eighty-eight years in the house, calls it Gibeon's Farm. *The Haywain*, now in the National Gallery, was exhibited in 1821 under the title of "Landscape: Noon," but remained unsold.

The sketches at Kensington and Burlington House show that Constable, while painting these large pictures in oil, was not neglecting the study of natural detail. Some of his best pencil-drawings of trees belong to the year 1820, and in the following two years he spent much time in painting skies from nature. These studies cannot claim to be regarded as pictures, but in the expression of natural colour, motion, and luminosity they can hardly be surpassed. The water-colour drawing of *Old Houses at Harnham Bridge—Salisbury*, made in 1820, shows how powerfully he could handle that medium, and may be compared, not unprofitably, with the later sketch of the same place in the British Museum.

Constable's large picture at the Academy in 1822 was a *View on the Stour*, now in the possession of Mr. T. H. Miller of Preston. Constable painted several variations of this composition, one of which was mezzotinted by Lucas and another engraved in line by W. R. Smith. It represents the Stour just below Flatford Lock, and is painted in a more sober key than most of Constable's work at this time, being in this respect a contrast to the *Salisbury Cathedral*, exhibited in the following year, and now at South Kensington. There for the first time we notice that tendency to paint glittering sunlight by spots and scumbles of pure bright pigment which is characteristic of Constable's later manner. He had for some years practised this method in his sketches, but the "Salisbury" is the first instance where it is used extensively in a large finished picture. He seems indeed to have had some difficulty with this work, finding that the rigid architectural lines gave the whole a formal effect without the contrast of brilliant handling and definite chiaroscuro. The fine picture of *Trees at Hampstead Church*, which was probably painted about this time, is handled far more quietly. At this time, too, while visiting Sir George Beaumont, he made a number of sketches in the grounds at Coleorton. Among them was a drawing of the monument to Sir Joshua Reynolds, which thirteen years later developed into *The Cenotaph*, now in the National Gallery.

In 1824 he exhibited *A Boat Passing a Lock*, possibly the picture in the Diploma Gallery which, though it bears the date 1820, looks as if it had been painted some years earlier. The date may have been added during some subsequent re-touching. In the summer he went to Brighton, where he made a large number of sketches,

some of which were mezzotinted by Lucas. Those that especially deserve notice are the brilliant *Brighton Beach with Colliers*, the *Cirrus Clouds* (No. 784) at Kensington, and the study of a rain-storm passing over a grey-blue sea in the Diploma Gallery. A pencil-drawing in the British Museum shows that he visited Arundel in this year.

Constable's art was now fully matured, and he was obtaining a fair share of recognition, owing to the sensation made by the exhibition of *The Haywain* and other pictures in Paris. In 1825 his *White Horse* was exhibited at Lille, and obtained a Gold Medal; while at the Academy he was represented by one of his most magnificent works, *The Leaping Horse*. We are fortunate in being able to trace its evolution from the rough sepia studies in the British Museum to the large oil-sketch at Kensington, and thence on to the finished work in the Diploma Gallery. Owing to its scale it appeared unwise to reproduce the latter here, but in no other single picture are Constable's peculiar excellences more happily combined and balanced. *The Leaping Horse* shows his mastery of cool colour, the horse in front and the group of trees behind are most nobly conceived; while the handling is as bold and fresh as the most advanced modern could desire, without the spottiness that usually deforms all efforts at extreme brilliancy. About this time he must have made some of the best of his sketches at Kensington—the *Hampstead Heath* (No. 122), the *Landscape with Cottage*, "*The Grove*," *Hampstead*, a fit companion to the well-known *Romantic House* in the National Gallery, and the water-colour *Houses with a Church Tower* (Dedham?) (No. 347).

The year 1806 marks the turning-point of Constable's career. Up to that time he had been a careful but hardly brilliant imitator of the old masters. The sketch of *Dedham Vale*, dated 1802, is the only work which shows any indication of the path he was afterwards to follow. When he visited the Lake District he really threw aside tradition, and sketched in the fresh colouring of nature, though he failed when he tried to employ the new scheme on a larger scale. In a sketch unity can easily be obtained by devices that are impossible in large pictures, where the composition has to be built up by elaborate machinery. Feeling that he could not as yet control this machinery, Constable set himself to learn its secrets by returning to the study of Reynolds and others of the

old masters. His experiments in landscape were for a time confined to modest proportions, and he did not begin to paint on a large scale until he had assured himself of the soundness of his principles of work. The progress of his thoughts may be traced from the *Dawn* (1809) to the sketches of *Bergholt Church* (1812), and thence to the *Boat-building* (1815), *The Cottage in a Cornfield* (1817), *The Haywain* (1821), and *The Leaping Horse* (1825). By comparing these pictures one can see how Constable depended for the unity of his compositions upon a chiaroscuro sketch in cool transparent brown, into which his local colour is floated, at first sparingly, afterwards with ever-increasing vigour and boldness, till at last in *The Leaping Horse* we find a picture which, at first sight, looks quite modern, so entirely has the monochrome foundation been concealed by subsequent solid painting. This single series of pictures may, in fact, be regarded as an epitome of the transition from the landscape of the old masters to that of the moderns. It is also sufficient evidence that the first and greatest of modern landscape painters did not discard the elementary principles which guided his predecessors, but only adapted them to new conditions. That saying of his, "I was always determined that my pictures should have chiaroscuro if they had nothing else," was no empty boast. The most advanced modern could hardly dislike conventional fusty colour more than Constable, yet Constable did not hesitate to use a brown monochrome as a foundation for his large pictures, because he had found that without it he was unable to make a picture at all. That he learned to disguise this foundation is not the least of his contributions to the development of painting.

1826-1837

IN 1826 Constable issued an interesting circular relating to the prices of his pictures. It runs as follows :—

A SCALE OF MR. CONSTABLE'S PRICES FOR LANDSCAPE—

Of the size of 1 ft. 6 in.	20 guineas
From 1 ft. to 2 ft.	40 "
„ 2 ft. to 2 ft. 6 in.	50 "
„ 2 ft. 6 in. to 3 ft.	60 "
Half-length size, namely—	
4 ft. 2 in. × 3 ft. 4 in.	120 "
In larger sizes the price will be regulated by circumstances depending on time and subject.	

35 CHARLOTTE STREET, 1826.

Though these prices may seem low compared with the sums asked by successful men at the present day, it should be remembered that the smaller pictures were often little more than sketches which did not represent any large amount of labour or elaborate composition. The purchasing power of money, too, was greater in Constable's time, while the social aspirations (and, in consequence, the expenses) of an Associate of the Academy were then far more modest.

His principal work at the Academy of 1826 was the well-known *Cornfield*, one of his most powerful and vigorous works, the group of massive elm trees on the left being especially fine. The study for the donkey browsing in the hedge may be seen at Kensington. *The Cornfield* was again exhibited in the following year at the British Institution, together with *The Glebe Farm*, a popular work, but hardly successful in colour, and more spotty in general appearance than Constable's work had hitherto been. In the Academy of 1827 his chief picture was the large *Marine Parade and Chain Pier, Brighton*. The smaller works present a remarkable contrast.

One was *The Water Mill, Gillingham*, which represents Constable's art in its soundest phase. It had probably been started some years before, since the building represented was burned in 1825. The second picture was a *Hampstead Heath*, probably the largest of those at South Kensington. In it the characteristics of Constable's latter manner are apparent—reckless freedom of brushwork, reckless use of the palette-knife to get brilliancy, and everywhere spots and scratches of pure colour. He had for many years employed such methods in sketching to catch the glitter and freshness which he admired in nature, and had often used them in parts of large pictures to get some particular effect, but *The Hampstead Heath* is one of the first pictures in which they actually predominate. His large Academy picture of 1828, an upright view of Dedham Vale, is interesting because it is identical in design with the Kensington sketch of 1802, and shows that little or no change had taken place in the painter's affection for his native Suffolk. It was admirably mezzotinted by Lucas on a large scale.

In 1829 Constable was made a full member of the Academy, and his chief picture of that year, the *Hadleigh Castle*, was the work that Chantrey is said to have warmed upon Varnishing Day with a glaze of asphaltum, much to the painter's alarm. The composition was twice engraved by Lucas, with whom Constable was now arranging for the series of mezzotints from his sketches, that he published in six parts under the title of "Various Subjects of Landscape Characteristic of English Scenery."

The publication was produced and issued at the painter's own expense. He not only took the greatest care in the selection of the subjects, but supervised the details of the engraving, and even went to the expense of engraving plates twice when dissatisfied with the first result. The outcome was the most magnificent series of landscape mezzotints ever produced. Even Turner's *Liber Studiorum*, with its amazing delicacy, variety, and accomplishment, does not move one so profoundly.¹ Conditions of space unfortunately forbid me to treat the plates in detail, but no one who wishes really to understand Constable should lose an opportunity of acquiring any of them that he happens to meet with. The series was from the first an absolute failure, and even now good proofs cost less than most modern etchings.

¹ A more extended notice of the series with several illustrations will be found in *The Dome* for May 1900.

Stress has already been laid on the sound system of *chiaroscuro* which underlies all Constable's work. It is not therefore odd that his painting when translated into black and white should become not only more powerful but also more harmonious in effect. Constable in writing to Lucas tells him to "beware of his soot-bag." We ought to be thankful that Lucas used his own discretion in the matter, for owing to judicious simplification of the shadows, and the omission of small spots of light, the prints are broad and majestic in effect, even where the originals suggest mere "great-coat weather." A more critical age will doubtless do Lucas proper justice, and give him his true place among the masters of British Engraving. Constable's share in the credit for the "English Landscape Scenery" may be assessed by a simple experiment. Charles Turner made an excellent little mezzotint of Rembrandt's noble *Mill*, now in the possession of Lord Lansdowne. If this print be compared with *The Weymouth Bay* or *The Old Sarum*, it will be found that all three designs might almost have come from the same hand.

During the last seven years of his life Constable's painting was much interrupted by ill-health, depression, and by the anxieties attending the production of the "English Landscape Scenery." His style of sketching at the beginning of this period can be best understood by reference to several of the smaller works at Kensington. The small study for *The Valley Farm* deserves special attention for the beauty of its colour, and an air of dignity and repose unusual with the master during his last years. The *Study of Tree Stems* might almost come from the hand of Manet, so brilliant and natural is the blaze of the sunlight, so frank is the treatment of the cool shadows. The furious sepia studies of buildings and trees at Dedham and Bergholt may also be assigned to this period. The *View of Hampstead Heath*, which Constable exhibited at the Academy of 1830, is probably identical with the picture in the National Gallery. If it be compared with the Kensington picture of 1828, the continual increase in the use of the palette-knife will be apparent.

In 1831 Constable exhibited one of his masterpieces—*Salisbury from the Meadows*—so admirably mezzotinted on a large scale by Lucas that no description is necessary. In the following year he showed *The Opening of Waterloo Bridge*, for which the first sketch had been made more than ten years earlier. No picture

seems to have caused Constable so much trouble, or to have been so often re-worked by him. Though it was an unpopular painting at the Academy, it is one of his most glowing and brilliant productions. Leslie says that all its brightness was destroyed by a picture-dealer, who covered the picture with coats of blacking and varnish to "tone" it. It would appear that this damage has since been repaired. Certainly, when the picture was last exhibited at Burlington House the impression it left was one of extraordinary splendour and power, in spite of the masses of loaded pigment in the sky. Constable's chief Academy picture of 1833 was *Englefield House, Berkshire—Morning*. A small water-colour of the subject, dated 1832, may be seen at Kensington. In the same room is a larger version of *Old Sarum*, one of the water-colours which were all that he could exhibit in 1834 owing to ill-health.

In his single Academy picture of 1835, the famous *Valley Farm*, Constable returns for the last time to the haunts of his youth, Willy Lott's cottage and the Flatford mill-stream by it. Attention has already been called to the finest of his many sketches of the composition. The majestic *Cenotaph* in the National Gallery, a view of the monument to Reynolds in the grounds at Coleorton, was Constable's principal Academy picture of 1836. The sketch for it, probably made during the painter's visit to Sir George Beaumont in 1823, is at Kensington. At Kensington, too, may be seen Constable's other Academy exhibit of 1836, a large water-colour of Stonehenge, seen under a tremendous effect of storm. In the same room hangs the brilliant sketch in oils of *A Windmill near Brighton*, the upright composition engraved by Lucas for the "English Landscape." The sketch and the engraving are placed side by side, so that it is easy to note how the painter, with the strong colour and loaded pigment characteristic of his last years, has aimed at an effect of brilliant sunlight and contrast, while the engraver's feeling for breadth has so softened the abrupt transitions that the scene has become grand and majestic. Before the opening of the Academy of 1837 Constable was dead, but his friends thought that his large picture of *Arundel Mill* was sufficiently finished to be shown in the Exhibition. The engraving of it by Lucas is not the most successful of his plates, being overcrowded with detail. The composition would have looked better had it been reproduced upon a larger scale.

Constable's comparatively early death was not in all respects

unfortunate. He was at least spared the pain of seeing his work steadily deteriorate with advancing years. No deduction can be made from the sum-total of his achievement by balancing any feeble productions of old age against the excellence of maturity, as foolish people are apt to do in the case of men like Titian or Turner, who outlived the culmination of their genius. There is evidence, too, that Constable was not likely to have attained to greater perfection; indeed, in some respects, his work might have become in time less evenly excellent.

Some of the pictures exhibited after 1825, the *Gillingham Mill*, for instance, have the solidity and soundness of his full maturity, but in such cases it will be found that the pictures had been in hand for some time, and the date of exhibition represents only the date at which the finishing touches were added. The evidence of Constable's later sketches is more decisive. The studies made after the painter's fiftieth year are loose hasty memoranda, done anyhow. A few, it is true, are finished carefully, but they are the exceptions. As a rule, the passion for brightness, movement, and glitter becomes increasingly predominant, to the exclusion of graver artistic qualities, till at times the result is strikingly modern. The Kensington study of a tree stem surrounded by blazing sunlight has already been mentioned as an anticipation of Manet. In certain other sketches Constable went still further, and by a loose tremulous handling caught the effect of atmospheric vibration, which was rediscovered many years later by Monet and Pissarro. The logical result of such experiments is scientific imitation rather than Art, and, though a longer life might have enabled Constable to become even more modern than he is, it is doubtful whether he would have added to his fame as an artist.

The actual scope of his achievement is already wide enough. In early life his aim had been to find out how far the cool fresh colours of the skies and streams and fields and trees of his beloved Suffolk could be suggested within the then accepted limits of oil-painting. In middle age this aim was complicated by the desire of rendering effects of wind and storm, so that his work became the channel of deeper and stronger emotions than those aroused by rusticity in its everyday aspect. Doubtless the discouraging circumstances in which he developed had something to do with this preference for the more threatening and gloomy attitudes of

nature. After his fiftieth year Constable became a devotee of light and air. He found, as the moderns have found, that this devotion was incompatible with the traditional handling of oil-paint—with smooth shapely brushwork passing by adroit transitions into a harmonious foundation of broken grey or brown, and afterwards mellowed by a warm glaze. To suggest the shimmer of wet grass and leaves in sunlight, or the intense brightness of the summer sky, he had to use paint fresh from the tube, loading parts of his canvas with spots and masses of pure pigment, so that no single atom of illumination might be lost. His method, in fact, was almost identical with that of our modern scientific painters, except in one important respect.

The essential difference is that Constable retained to the last his sound foundation in monochrome. Paintings like *The Leaping Horse*, *The Valley Farm*, and *The Cenotaph*, with all their splashing and spotting and scraping and loading, have thus a certain unity and dignity, which enables them to hang by the side of the paintings of the old masters, without looking garish or undecided. The very limitations of interest and insight which prevent Constable from ranking with Michelangelo or Titian or Rembrandt, have at least allowed him to achieve a success which at present remains unique. To blame him for not anticipating the feeling for a less conventional spacing, which has been stimulated during the last forty years by the discovery of the art of Japan, would be as unfair as to insist on the fact that his technique is less supremely certain or his taste less intensely sensitive than that of the greatest artists of the past. It is only necessary to compare his work with that of his predecessors or contemporaries, to realize how vast was the revolution that he initiated, more especially in the matter of colour, which he treated with a combination of frankness and temperance as yet unsurpassed. No man has hitherto combined so much of that beauty of aspect which we all admire in the Art of the past, with so large a measure of the wind and sunshine which have become the condition of the painting of our own day. Had Constable carried realism further, it might have been difficult to claim so much for him.

LANDSCAPE AFTER THE DEATH OF CONSTABLE

DURING the first half of the nineteenth century, England and France were the only two countries of Europe where art was sufficiently alert to catch the innovations of Constable and experiment with them. Each nation used his discoveries, but with a difference of result corresponding to the difference between the two national characters. English landscape has remained local, and is practically unknown on the Continent. The complex ramifications of French realism have had an enormous influence upon the art of the world, and have spread to every country where oil-painting is practised. It will therefore be best to deal with France, before surveying the narrower paths of English landscape since the death of Constable.

When we think of French culture and talent we are apt to form a false opinion of them, from associating them either with work done in periods of unusual social or political excitement, with the neurotic products of over-civilized city life, or with intellects that are French only by geographical accident. We may thus lose sight of the essential character of the French genius, and forget that Racine is perhaps its truest type; that if it inherits the excitability of its Roman progenitors, it also inherits (at least in the Arts) the Roman sense of style, proportion, and logic.

In 1824, when Constable's pictures first appeared in Paris, the country had not fully recovered from the shock and stress of the Revolution, and was still bent on endowing Art and Literature with the freedom which had already been gained in politics. It was a time of reaction against the stereotyping of the national characteristics, which had resulted from centuries of absolute monarchy. The pictures of Constable and of the brilliant shallow

Bonington were welcomed, as the writings of Scott and Byron had been welcomed, not so much for their actual merit, though this was generally admitted and sometimes exaggerated, but as indicating the lines on which the desired departure was possible.

In the course of a century and a half the logical side of the French character had stiffened the stern canons of Poussin till they had lost all relation either to nature or to art. The revolt from this academic severity was of necessity violent. Its leaders met with bitter opposition, while even those who tried to effect some kind of compromise could not escape scot-free. The life of Theodore Rousseau, who bore the brunt of the attack, is one long series of struggles and rebuffs, with but brief intervals of rest and success. To some extent, undoubtedly, the painter himself was to blame. An eternal striving for nature and for novelty too often overstrained a technical accomplishment that was far from complete, so that he is frequently unworthy of his reputation. He lacked the stores of experience that Constable had accumulated by unceasing study of the old masters, and in their place had little more than the intention of being sincere at all costs.

To catch the broken shifting forms of clouds and trees in motion, Constable had discarded the shapely brush-strokes which had characterized all fine painting before his time, and, towards the end of his life, indulged in pats and dots and scrapings of pigment applied with the palette-knife. Nevertheless, he retained much of the traditional breadth and simplicity in the shadows and other quiet portions of his work. Courbet, in the effort to get away from academic methods, did all he could to prevent his touch from being shapely. His pictures, in consequence, are sometimes little more than expanses of rough, worried, clumsy paint. Constable based his work upon a chiaroscuro sketch in monochrome which united the colours and tones and masses into a connected whole. Courbet trusted to chance for unity, and therefore did not always get it. Constable glazed with great care, delicacy, and skill. Courbet, where he did not leave his paint raw just as it came from his brush, was content with a general rubbing of thin colour.

In the work of Corot and Millet the effects of the Revolution were less marked, for both, like Constable, never forgot the main points of the traditional technique. In Corot we get the modern raw pigment, the modern spottiness, the modern shapeless brush-

work, but his pictures are built on a monochrome foundation in the manner of Claude, while the artist's natural taste prevents the modernity of the colour and handling from being obtrusive. Millet was the great modern master of chiaroscuro. Unity therefore came naturally to him, yet, to make certainty still more certain, his toiling figures and stern landscape are bathed in the warm atmosphere of the old masters.

Millet, indeed, is a standing refutation of the idea that the modern attitude towards nature is incompatible with traditional methods of painting. His peasants are more like real peasants than those of anyone else, while his landscape suggests the weather and the time of day with a simple directness that makes the work of other painters look fantastic or laboured. His brushwork is often rather clumsy, for he never quite mastered the heaviness of hand he inherited from generations of peasant ancestors, but it is clumsy only in comparison with that of the great painters of the past. In any collection of modern work it would become by contrast quite shapely and classical.

The efforts of Rousseau and Courbet towards absolute realism were continued by Manet and Monet. In many respects the results obtained by Monet may be regarded as final, for his painting imitates the light and colour of nature as exactly as is possible with the artistic materials hitherto discovered. Such a remarkable degree of accuracy could only be obtained by the sacrifice of all that was usually considered essential to good painting. Design became a matter of chance, because nature was not to be altered or adapted. Ordered harmony of colour, for the same reason, became almost impossible. Fine painting was discarded because the mixing of pigments on the palette or even on the canvas involved some loss of luminosity. In order to make the nearest possible approach to the pitch of natural sunlight, pure pigment had to be used. To retain this purity each tone in nature was analyzed into its chromatic components, and small pats of the primary colours were placed side by side direct on the canvas, in such proportions that their united effect would produce the complex tone required.

The method had certain advantages. It allowed strong effects of light and colour to be rendered with great vigour and accuracy, while the infinite number of small spots of paint suggested the natural vibration of the atmosphere. Whether Monet's work can

always be called art, is another matter. Monet's aim was scientific truth, and scientific truth has no inevitable relation to art. The aim of art, however one defines it, must always be closely connected with beauty, and it is undeniable that Monet's painting, though always interesting, is not always beautiful. His spotty raw pigment is a positively unpleasant substance. His colour is harmonious or inharmonious, his design good or indifferent, in exact correspondence with the pictorial qualities of the subject in hand. As his subjects were usually chosen as materials for scientific experiment, their pictorial qualities are a mere matter of chance, and sometimes are slight enough.

Monet's ablest successors seem to have realized that this logical culmination of realism was also its *reductio ad absurdum*. The present tendency is in favour of very direct painting in fresh colour, but some discretion is exercised in the choice of subjects whose tones and colours are naturally harmonious. The paintings of Harpignies might serve as examples of such a compromise, while Cazin, by whom the method is combined with a vein of pensive poetry, has achieved results that, in their way, are charming. Of the landscape of Puvis de Chavannes this is hardly the place to speak. Had Constable never lived, Puvis de Chavannes might have worked in a more conventional key, but it is unlikely that the amazing originality of his genius would have failed to evolve the nobly spaced design, the frank use of silhouette, and the tranquil silver atmosphere that give him a place apart from the other artists of the nineteenth century. Some of his best qualities are found also in the work of his countryman, Professor Legros, where the ever-present memory of Rembrandt and Poussin makes them appear almost familiar.

Among the other Continental schools of landscape, that of Holland takes the first place. The Dutch have for centuries been a race of painters, so that in their hands the modern fashion in realism has not been carried to any absurd extremity, however apparent the French influence in their work may be. Their colour, if often too cold or too raw to be quite pleasant, is never violent or uncouth. Nevertheless, their dexterous compromise between art and nature has not the scientific interest of Monet's experiments, the real grandeur and force underlying the struggles of Rousseau, or the profound insight of Millet. Matthys Maris, it is true, is something of a visionary, whose dreams often recall

the poetry of Corot; but he is a solitary exception. The other Dutchmen paint absolutely in the spirit of their forefathers, turning out pictures of everyday life, soundly worked in the prevalent manner, of convenient size, and with no special emphasis or intention, for that might repel the average purchaser. Their output might, in fact, be open to the accusation of pot-boiling, were it not usually free from the cheap sentiment which the term generally connotes.

The garish vigour of Boecklin in Germany, and of Segantini in Italian Switzerland, has at least the merit of definite personality. This is more than can be said for the average work of their countrymen, who seem to be attracted only by what is showy and superficial in art and nature. Meunier, best known as a sculptor, has painted the forges and blast-furnaces of the Belgian Black Country with a sympathy and power that often remind one of Millet; though a certain outward uncouthness, which in Millet was a natural defect, appears with Meunier to have become a mannerism. Thaulow, the observer of Norwegian snows and floods, is a more attractive but less serious artist. His handling is skilfully varied, while his subjects are chosen with great taste in the matter of colour and arrangement, and are treated with an intimate affection that makes his painting popular as well as personal. In this respect Thaulow's work may be regarded as a sort of half-way house between Continental landscape and that of the British school.

On the Continent, under the leadership of the scientific spirit of France, painters have uniformly viewed Constable as the pioneer of new possibilities in the way of realistic interpretation of natural light and air. In England, even before Constable's death, the artistic world had become accustomed to a moderate degree of realism, owing to the example of the water-colour painters, and was content to go no further. The country was resting complacently after the strain of the Napoleonic wars, and insisted that its art should be something comfortable, something incapable of rousing any strong emotion. Even Turner's fame could not protect him from the jeers of the cultured classes when he grappled with problems of storm or blazing sunlight. It is hardly wonderful, then, that the lesser men should have settled down deliberately to turn out frankly popular pictures, which are still the small change of dealers and auctioneers.

The general attitude of these men may be summed up in the verdict of a French critic upon Millais—*pour amuser le gentry*. In Constable they saw only a painter of pretty rusticity; trim cottages, green fields, brown cows, blue skies, and soft pink clouds. They stippled their work all over, to give it the smoothness which a dunce mistakes for finish. They brightened the colours, so that their stuff might "tell" on a crowded Academy wall. They took care to eliminate everything which might conflict with the air of simpering prosperous respectability, which the patriotic Briton expected from the agricultural classes. Did our yokels always wear such brilliantly white linen, such scarlet caps and coats? Did English milkmaids always brave the elements in the piquant dishabille of convention? Was the sky always a bright chalky blue? Were the clouds always scattered and woolly? Was there always a dot of vermilion somewhere in the foreground, when those innumerable "landscapes with figures" were manufactured by the popular pets of the forties and fifties and sixties and seventies?

That these amiable pot-boiling tradesmen should have appreciated the grand restraint of Titian, the vigour of Rubens, or the intensity of Rembrandt would have been too much to expect, but there is no excuse for their neglect of the noble elements in the genius of their own countryman, Constable. Had they ever looked carefully at nature, and possessed any but the meanest ambitions, they could hardly have failed to sympathize with the sailing clouds of *The Cornfield* and *The Valley Farm*, the glistening meadows of *The Leaping Horse*, the storm and rainbow of the large *Salisbury Cathedral*, the tremendous desolation of *The Old Sarum*, or the hush that falls with the twilight of *The Cenotaph*. For those who are really interested in art there is no gradation in the things that are not art, so that to discuss the descent of certain successful moderns from Creswick or Shayer or Lee or Witherington would be entirely futile.

To such an extent has British landscape been vitiated by this taint of commerce, that it is hard to name more than a few painters and a few pictures which are free from it. Cox and De Wint, in spite of considerable natural gifts, practically succumbed to the necessity of doing small drawings that would sell readily. What Cox might have done under happier circumstances may be guessed from the magnificent drawing at Kensington of a storm sweeping

over a moor ; while a very large study of a waterfall, also in water-colour, exhibited at the Guildhall some years ago, showed a feeling for space and a sympathy with the grandeur of a great cataract that recall the noble conceptions of Hokusai. De Wint was a less gifted man, but his two landscapes in oil at South Kensington make one regret that he did not use that medium more frequently. The view over a wooded country, with a river winding among the trees far away, is especially notable for the perfection of its cool silvery colour.

The clever theatrical sketching of Müller was more directly indebted to Constable, but, like the laborious accumulations of John Linnell, it deserves no lengthy notice. Frederick Walker and George Mason are more definite links between the old art and the new. In their work there is a real attempt at definite design : though their conception of the world is merely pretty, their colour has too often an unpleasant tendency towards pinkness, and they always paint to catch the public eye. They certainly may claim to have inherited something of Constable's affection for English country life, and we should perhaps be more inclined to pardon their cheap graces and their sentimentality, were they not imitated and diluted by our feebler contemporaries. With them Cecil Lawson must be classed. His early death is often supposed to have been a heavy loss to English art, but his extant work is hardly strong enough to warrant the supposition. It is well intentioned, safe in colour, and fairly accomplished, but such qualities do not go very far towards the making of a really great painter.

The landscape work of Ford, Madox Brown, and the other artists associated with the Preraphaelite fraternity, in spite of occasional similarity in outward aspect, has no real connection with the work of Constable. The Preraphaelite realism was a realism of fact. The realism of Constable was a realism of effect. The difference can easily be understood if we think for a moment of three of our modern marine painters, Brett, Hook, and Henry Moore. Brett might serve as an example of a worker on principles akin to those of the Preraphaelites, while Hook and Henry Moore would represent the point of view of Constable. Of the last two painters Hook seems to have best understood Constable's true excellence. His composition is sound and sometimes original, his handling is skilful, and his colour harmonious, except in the

figures. Henry Moore had a tendency to mistake violence for strength. He dispensed with conventional composition, and never quite found a substitute for it. He used in his large pictures the raw colour and shapeless handling that were an unavoidable necessity when he sketched his shifting skies and foaming waves from nature. His paintings thus lack the design, the harmony, and the pleasant pigment which one finds in Hook; but the sea of Henry Moore is undoubtedly more like the real thing than anything else ever done. With Hook the direct influence of Constable comes to an end. Landscapes, it is true, are still turned out by the hundred, which at the first glance might seem to be reminiscences of Constable, for the subjects are rustic as were his, and are treated in a straightforward realistic manner. The realism, however, is marked by a certain incoherence of design and colour, which prevents such work from being artistic, and the rusticity has become mechanical from lack of that intimacy and affection which made Constable the first true painter of the country.

The best work done in England of recent years has been done by the painters who have inherited the tradition of Constable indirectly through the science of Monet or the poetry of Corot. Such work may not be great art, but it is frequently good art, for its primary impulse has been the creation of something beautiful. If the search for dignity, simplicity, and repose may sometimes seem to have been carried too far, so that one finds oneself wishing for a wider outlook, for more deliberately planned brushwork, or a more vehement emotional impulse, it is well to remember that dignity, simplicity, and repose are not only enough in themselves to make good art, but that they have always been uncommon qualities in painting, and never more so than at present.

The landscape work of some members of the Glasgow school might perhaps suggest a more direct descent from Constable on account of the roughness of their handling, the freshness of their colour, their recognition of the sky as a compositional quantity, and the air of breezy vigour which pervades them. Their naturalism, however, differs radically from that of Constable in the method of its adaptation to pictorial purposes, in that it is governed by the principles of ordered selection that characterize the art of the Far East. The true culmination of these ideals is found in the exquisite landscapes of Mr. Whistler, where there is

but little that can be attributed to the influence of Constable, whether direct or indirect. Indeed, in some respects it represents the diametrically opposite point of view. Constable's work is really done in the manner of Rembrandt; that is to say, it is unified by a chiaroscuro scheme into which the local colour is worked. Mr. Whistler's painting is really done in the manner of Harunobu; that is to say, it is unified by the rhythmic iteration of certain selected notes of colour. If, then, we compare Constable with the most perfect development of contemporary landscape, it will be seen that he is not only the first of the moderns, but perhaps was also the last of our old masters.





I. BARNES COMMON (Oil Painting: in the National Gallery)





II. A BRIDGE ON THE STOUR (Waker Colour; at South Kensington).



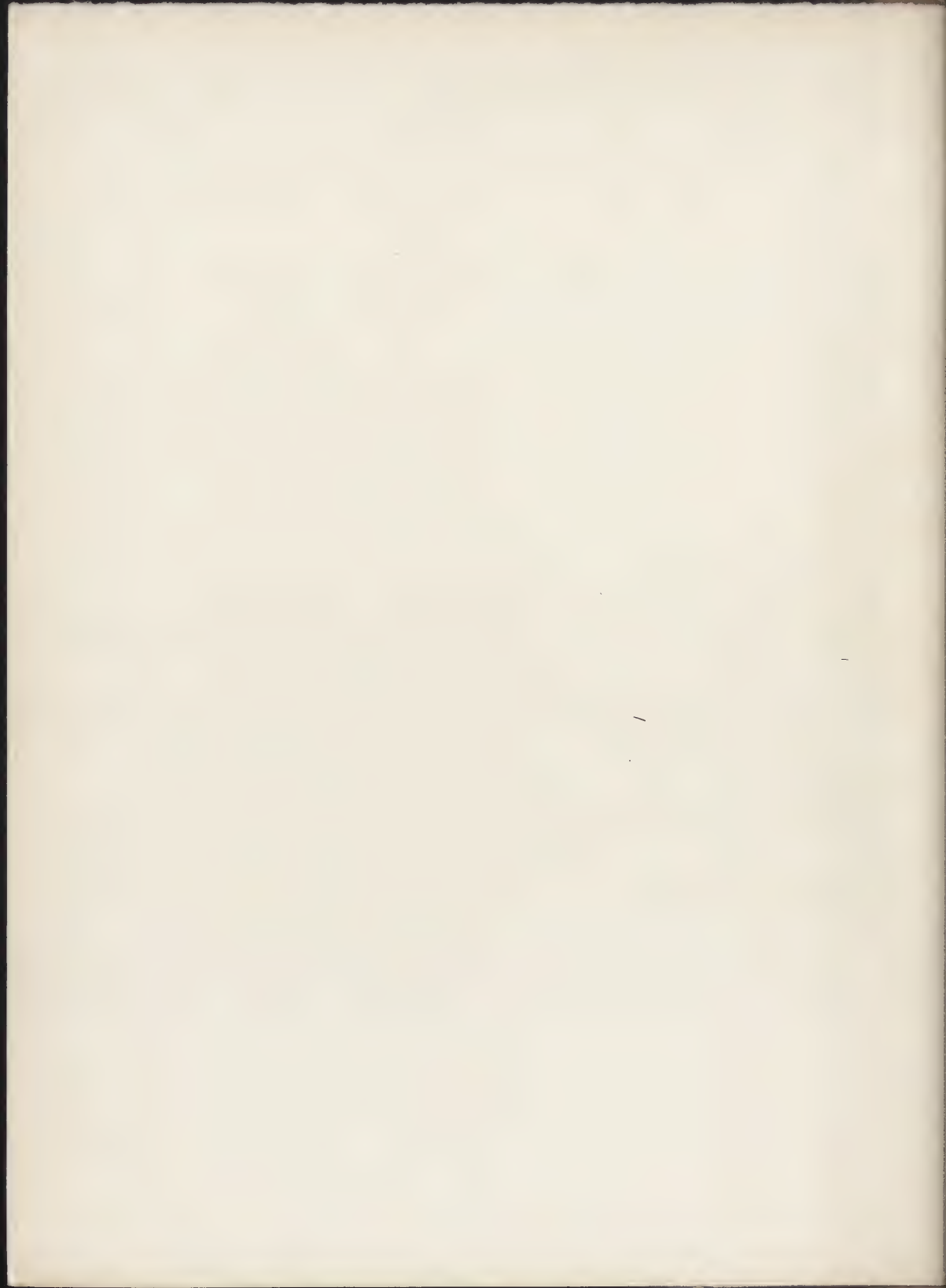


III. A VIEW IN BOKKON'DALE (Water Colour; at South Kensington).



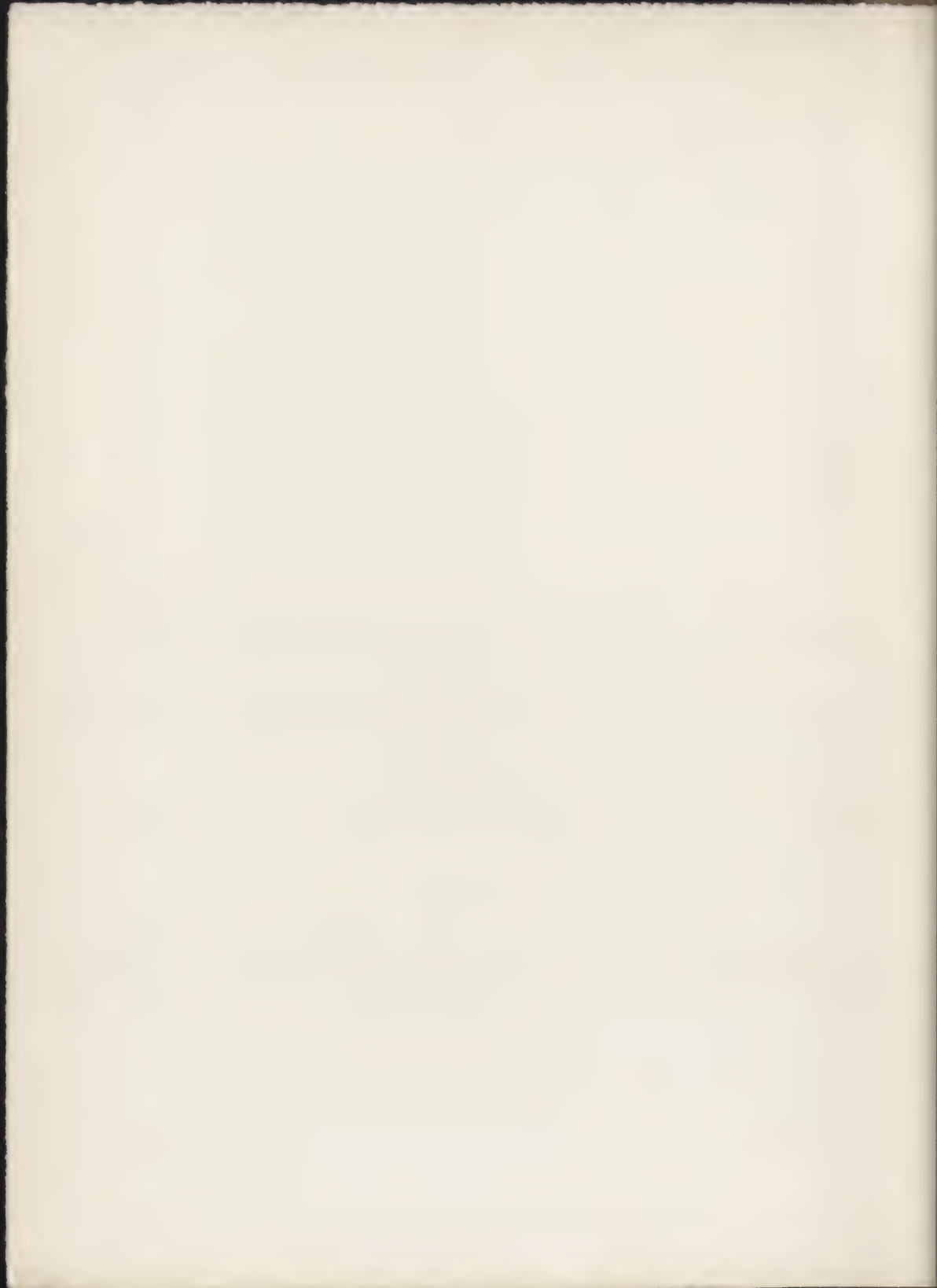


IV. *SUNSET* (Oil Painting: in the possession of the Author).





1. DAWN (Oil Painting: in the possession of G. A. Phillips, Esq.)





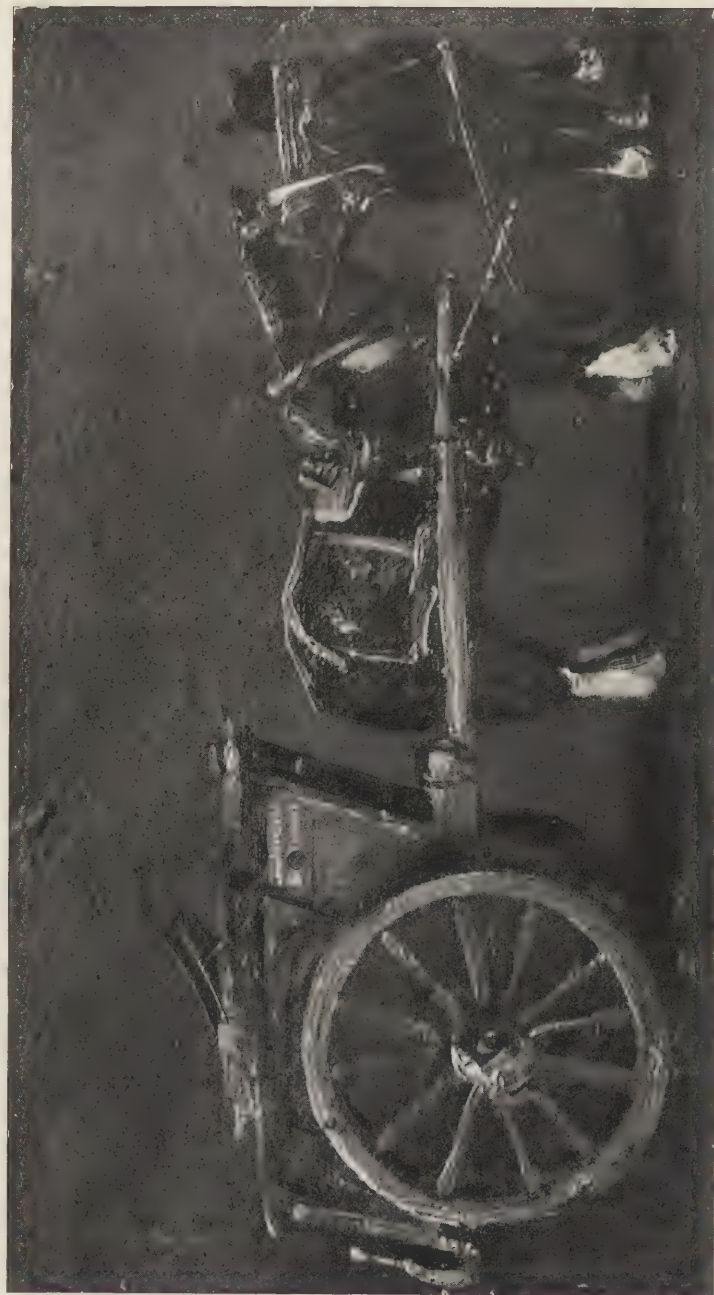
171. *THE PORCH OF EAST BERGHOLT CHURCH* (Oil Painting: at South Kensington).





VII. TREES AND COTTAGES (Oil Painting: at South Kensington).



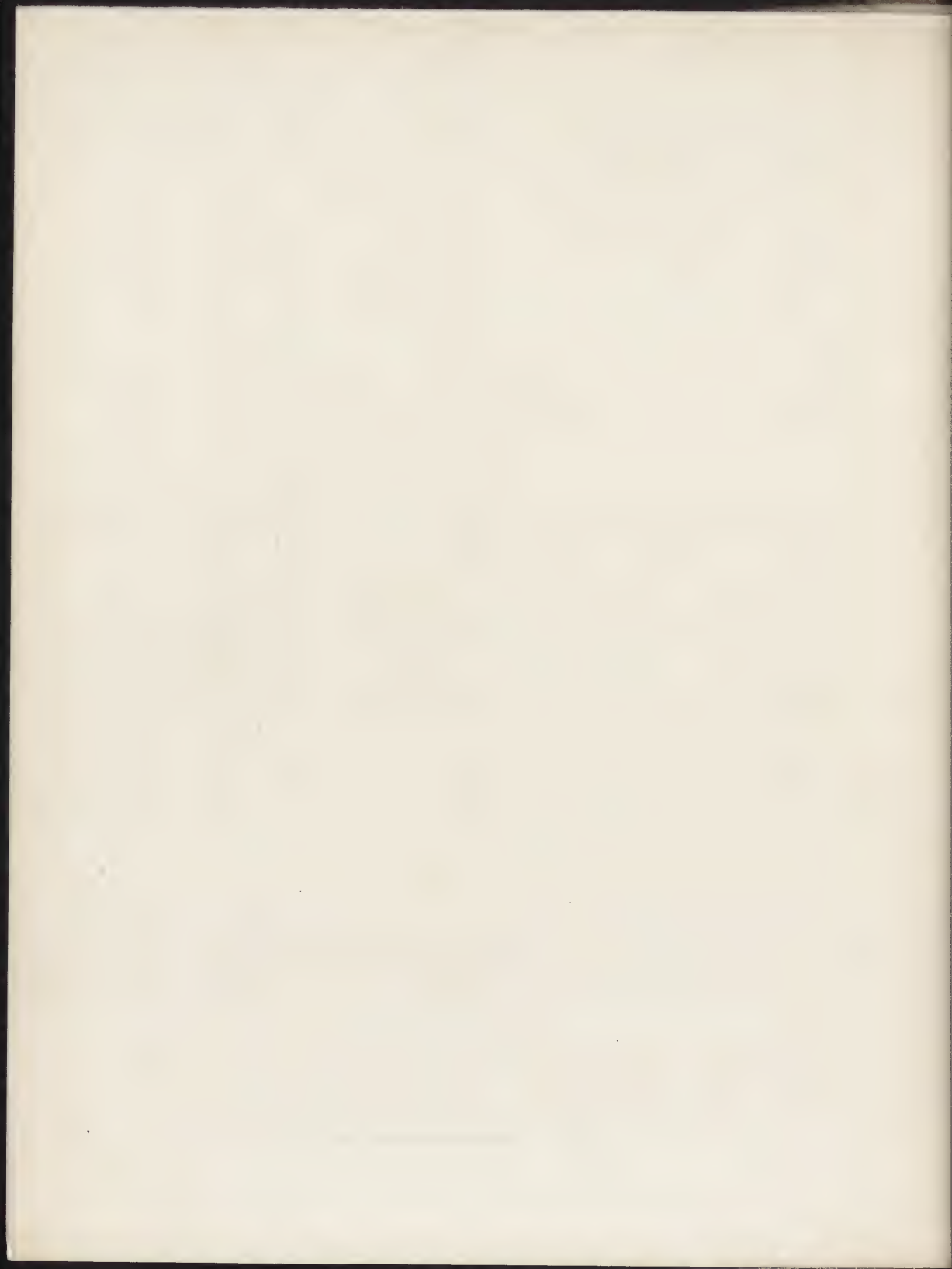


VIII. A CART AND HORSES (A Sketch in Oils: at South Kensington).





IX. A CORNFIELD (A Sketch in Oils; in the National Gallery).





X. STUDY OF THE STEM OF AN ELM-TREE (Oil Painting; at South Kensington).





XI. THE WEST-END OF BERGHOLT CHURCH (Oil Painting: at South Kensington).





NILE ON THE STOCK NEAR DEDHAM (Oil Painting; at South Kensington).



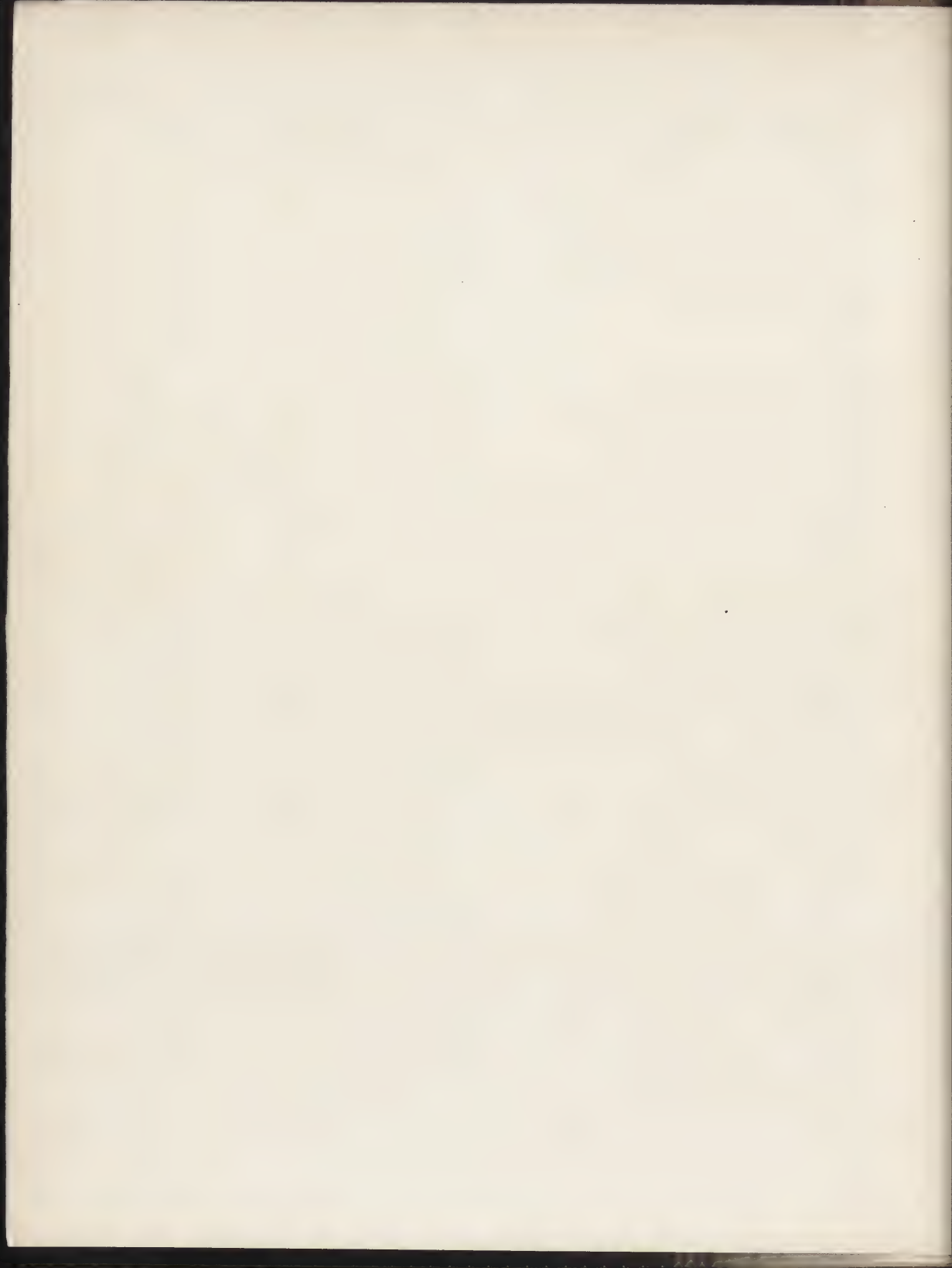


XIII. OLD SARCOM (Mesopotamia); by David Lucas.



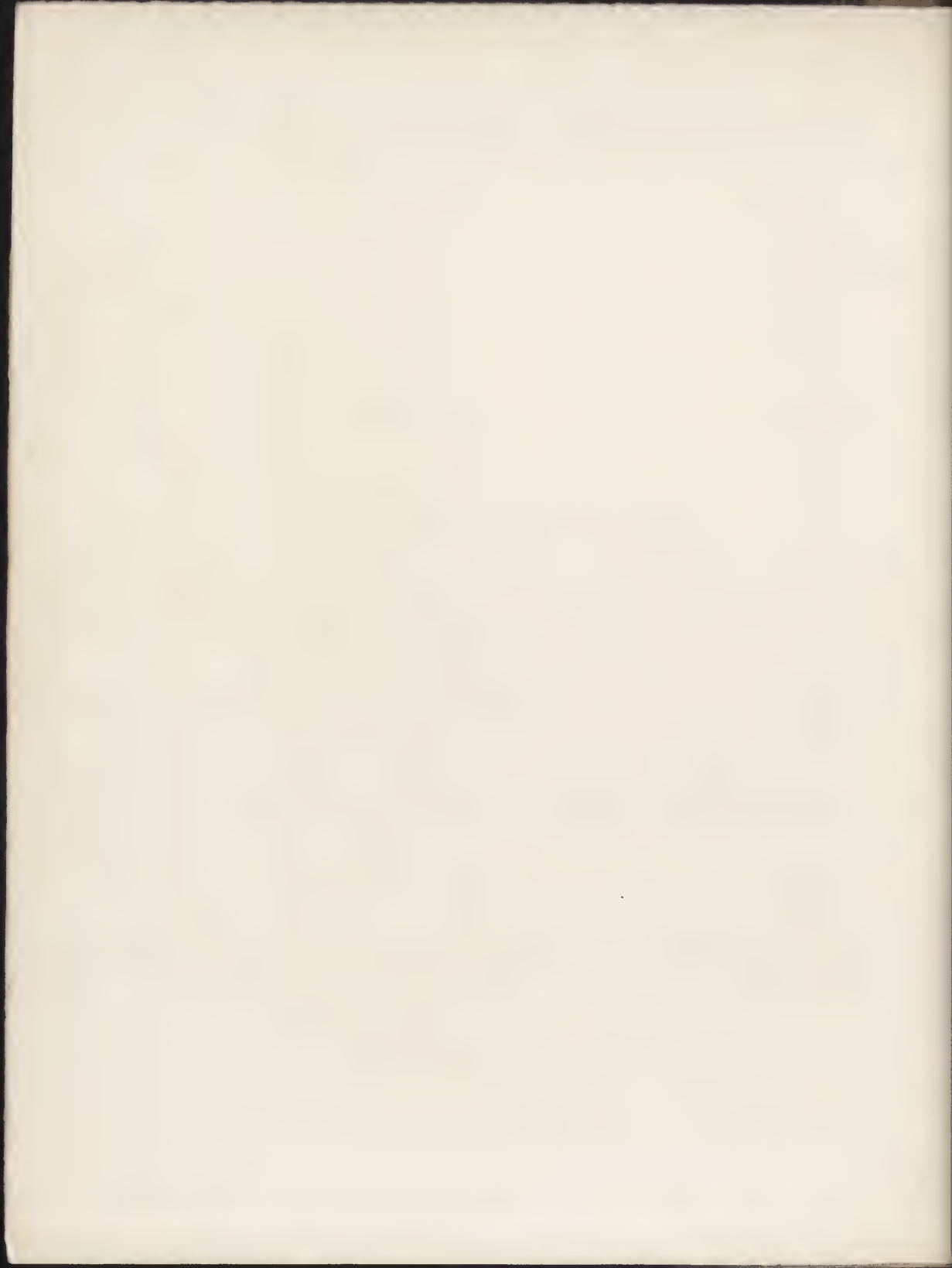


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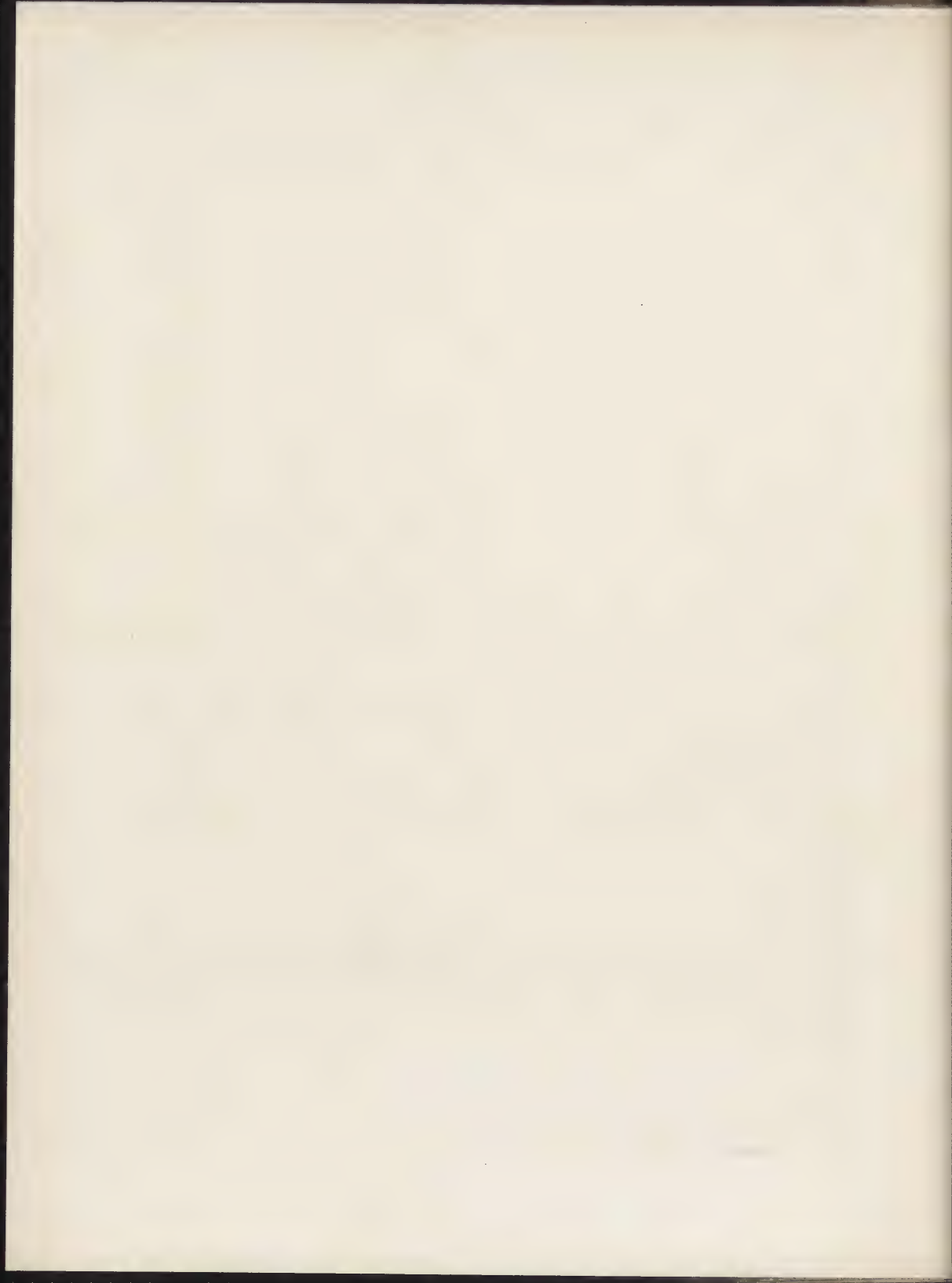


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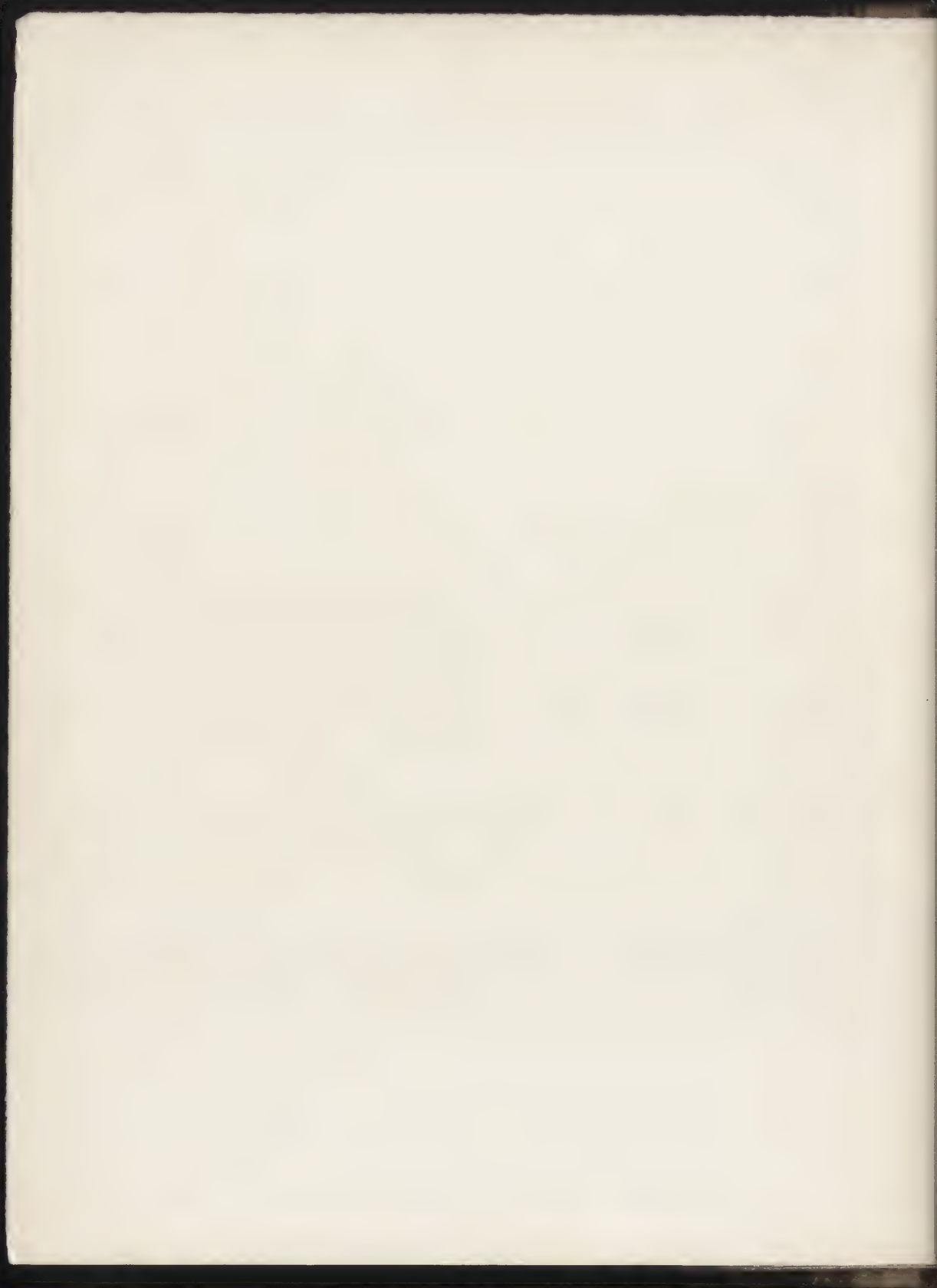


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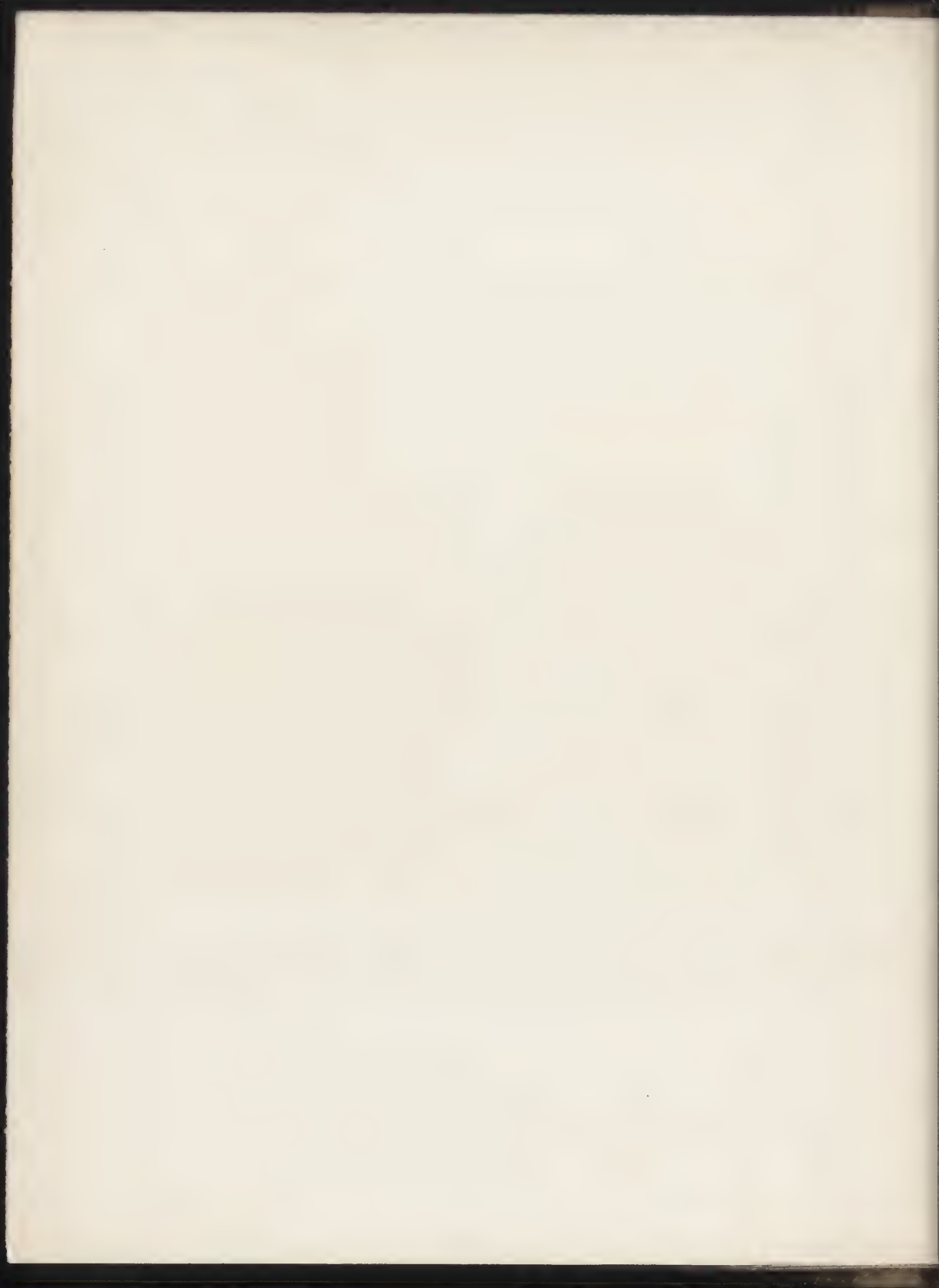


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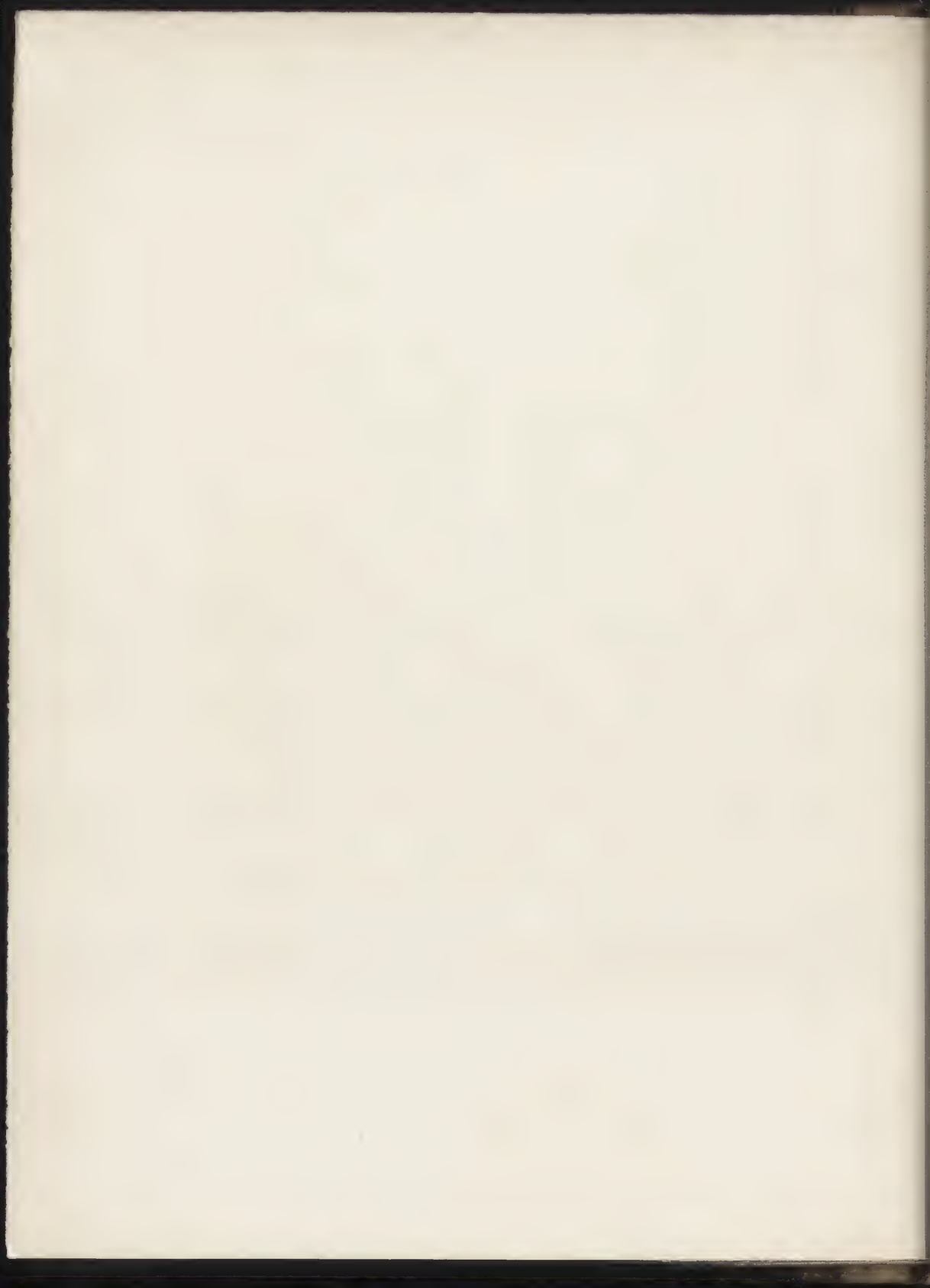


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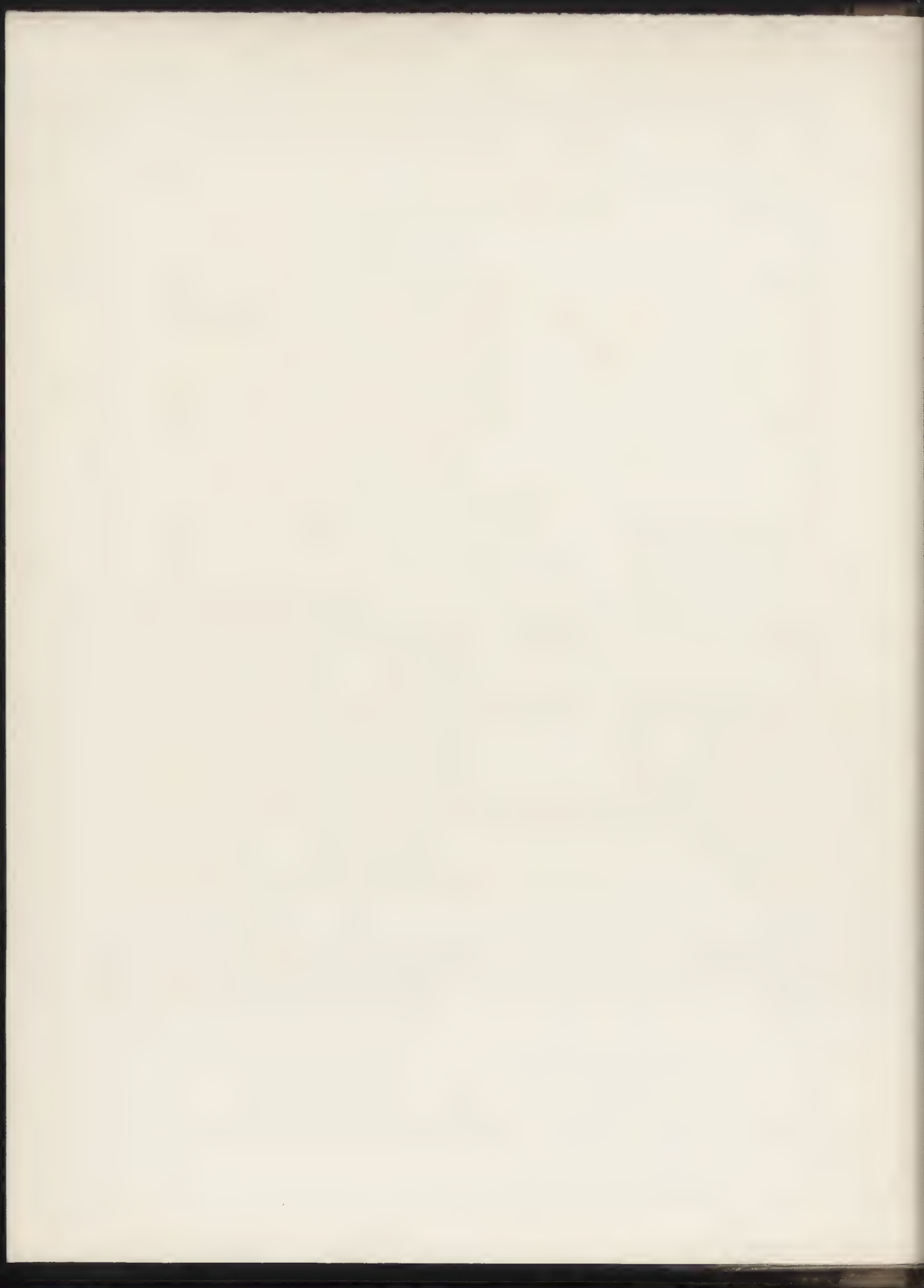


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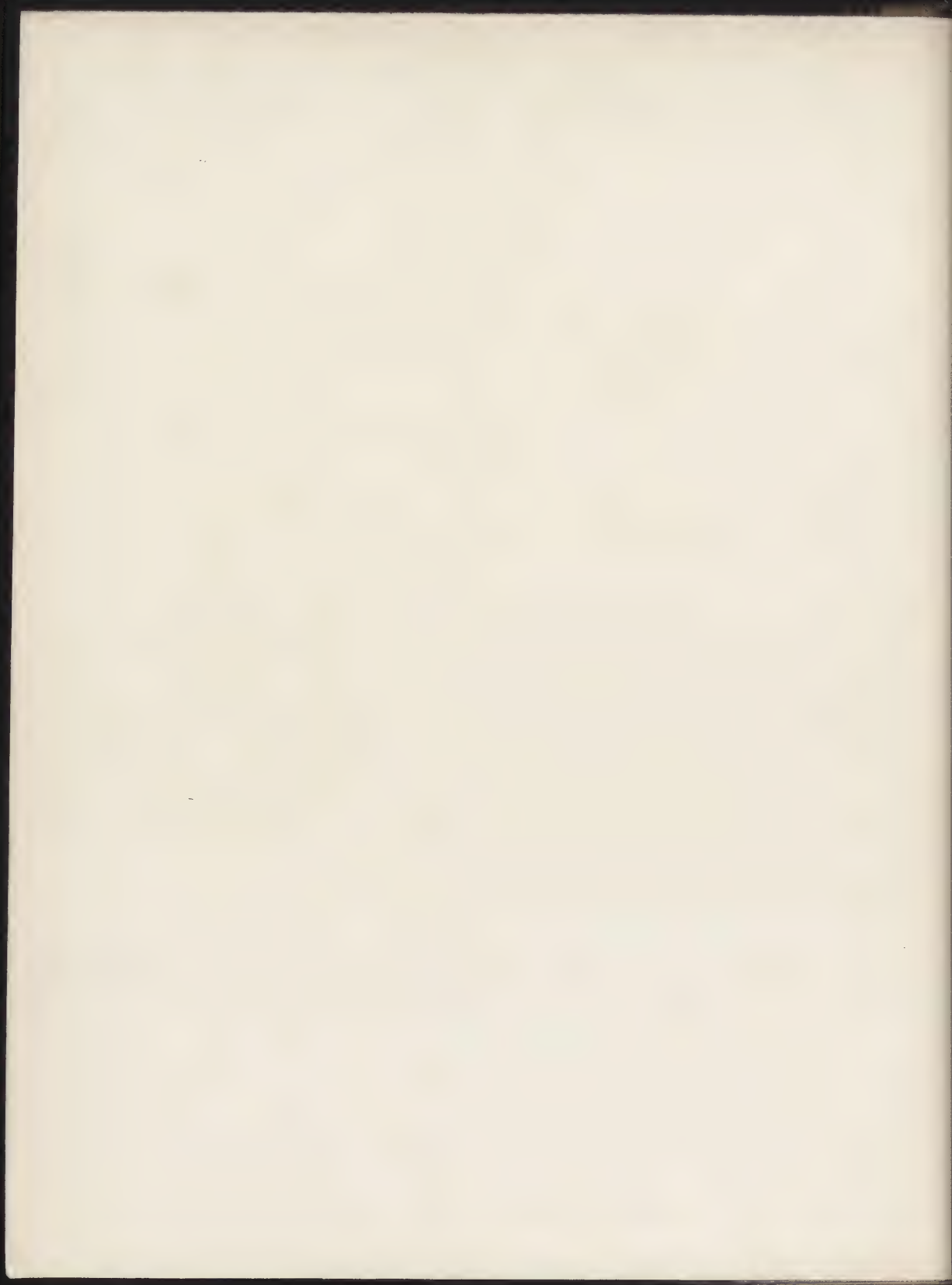


XX. 'STUDY FOR "THE VALLEY FARM"' (Oil Sketch; at South Kensington).





XXI. A STUDY OF TREE STEMS (Oil Sketch: at South Kensington).





XXII. SALISBURY CATHEDRAL FROM THE MEZZOTINT; by David Lucas.



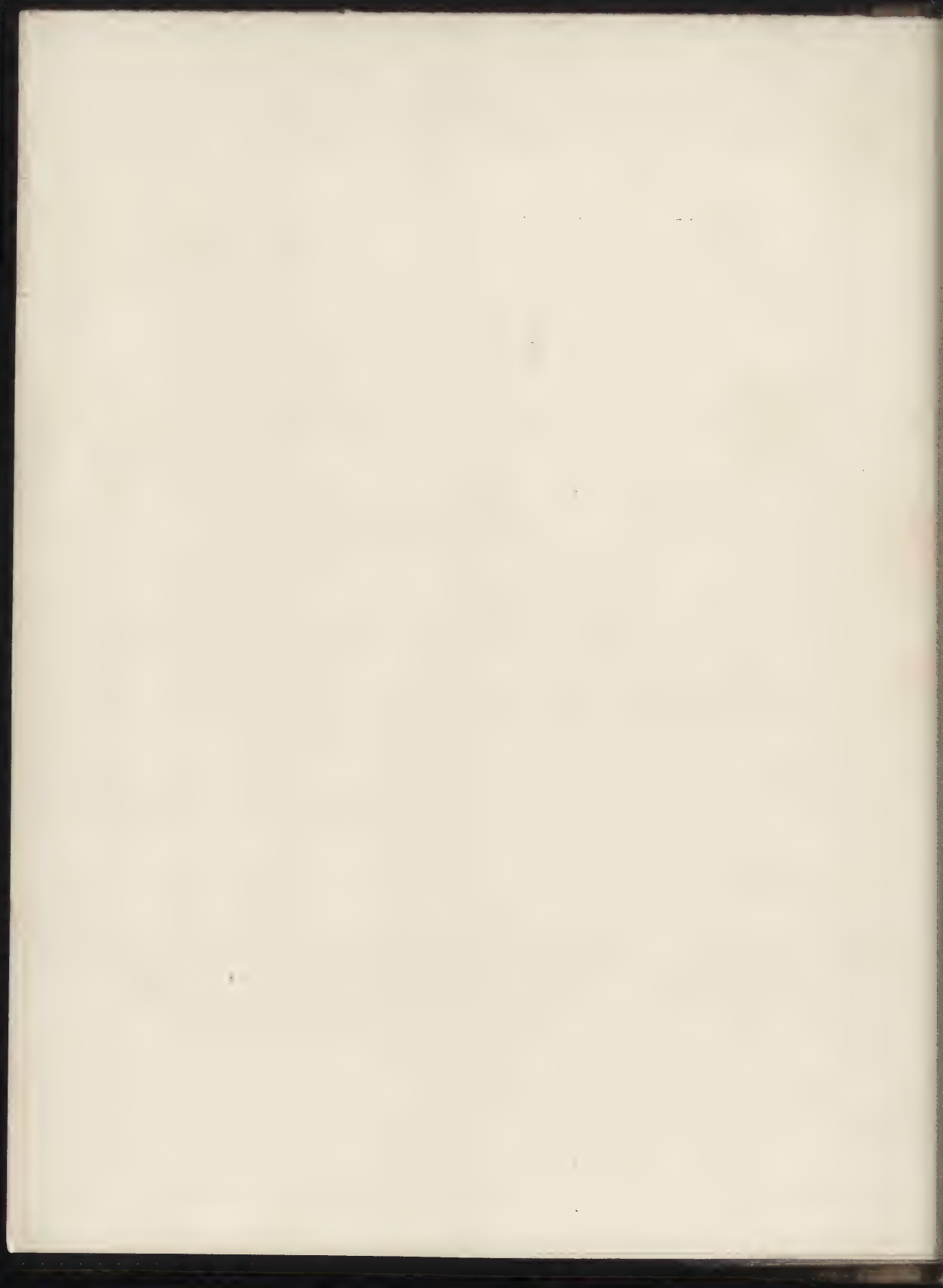


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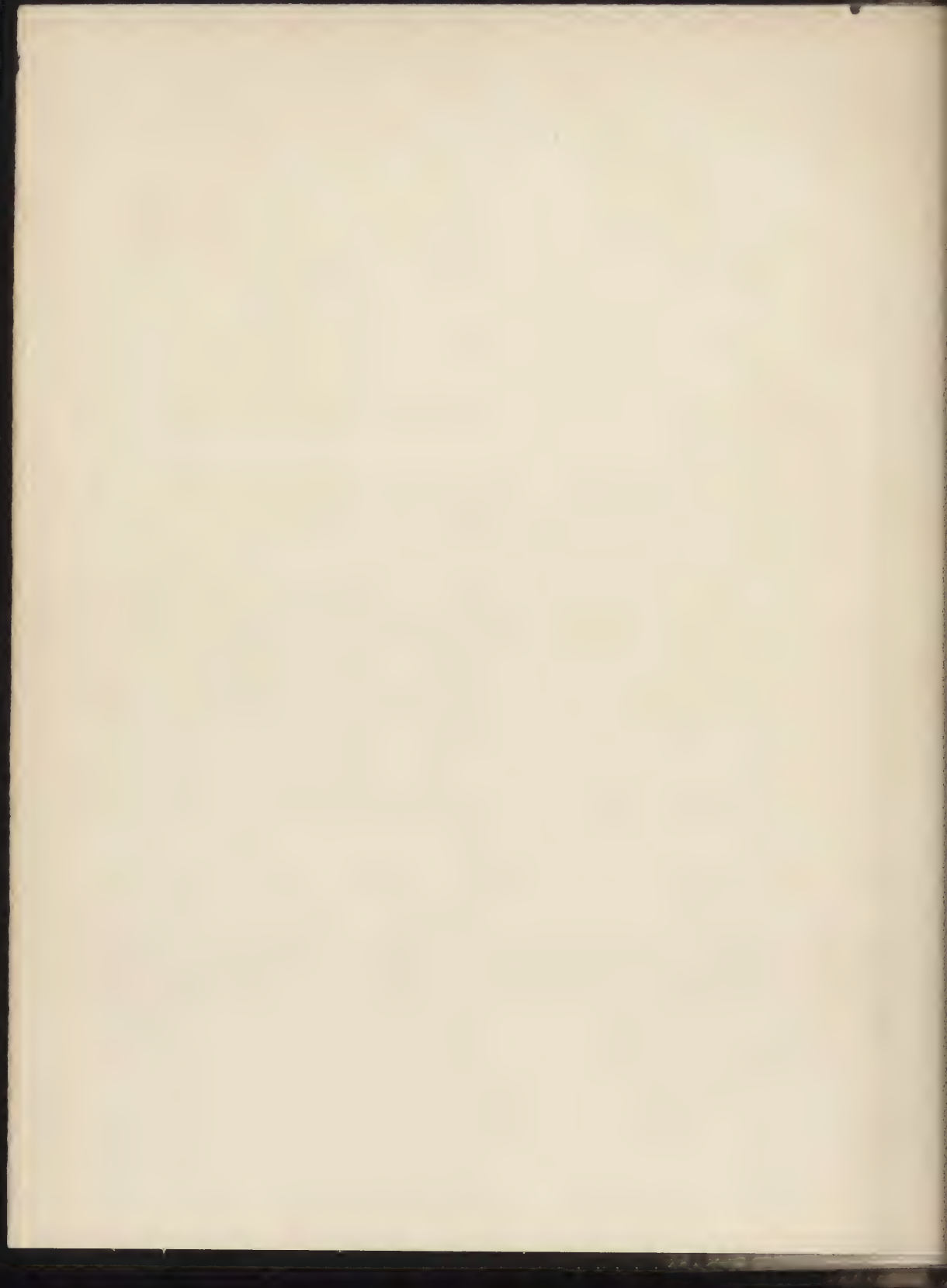
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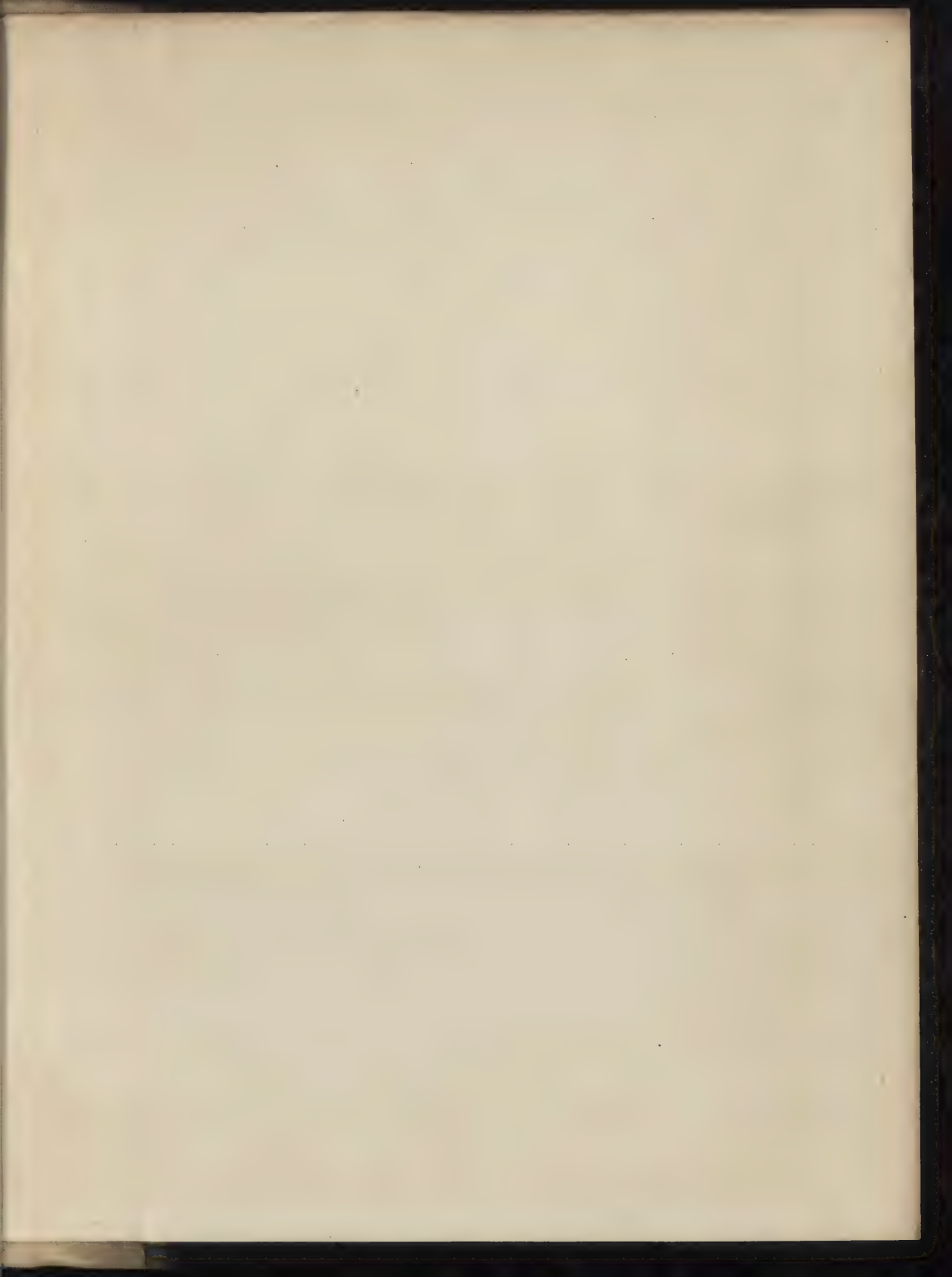
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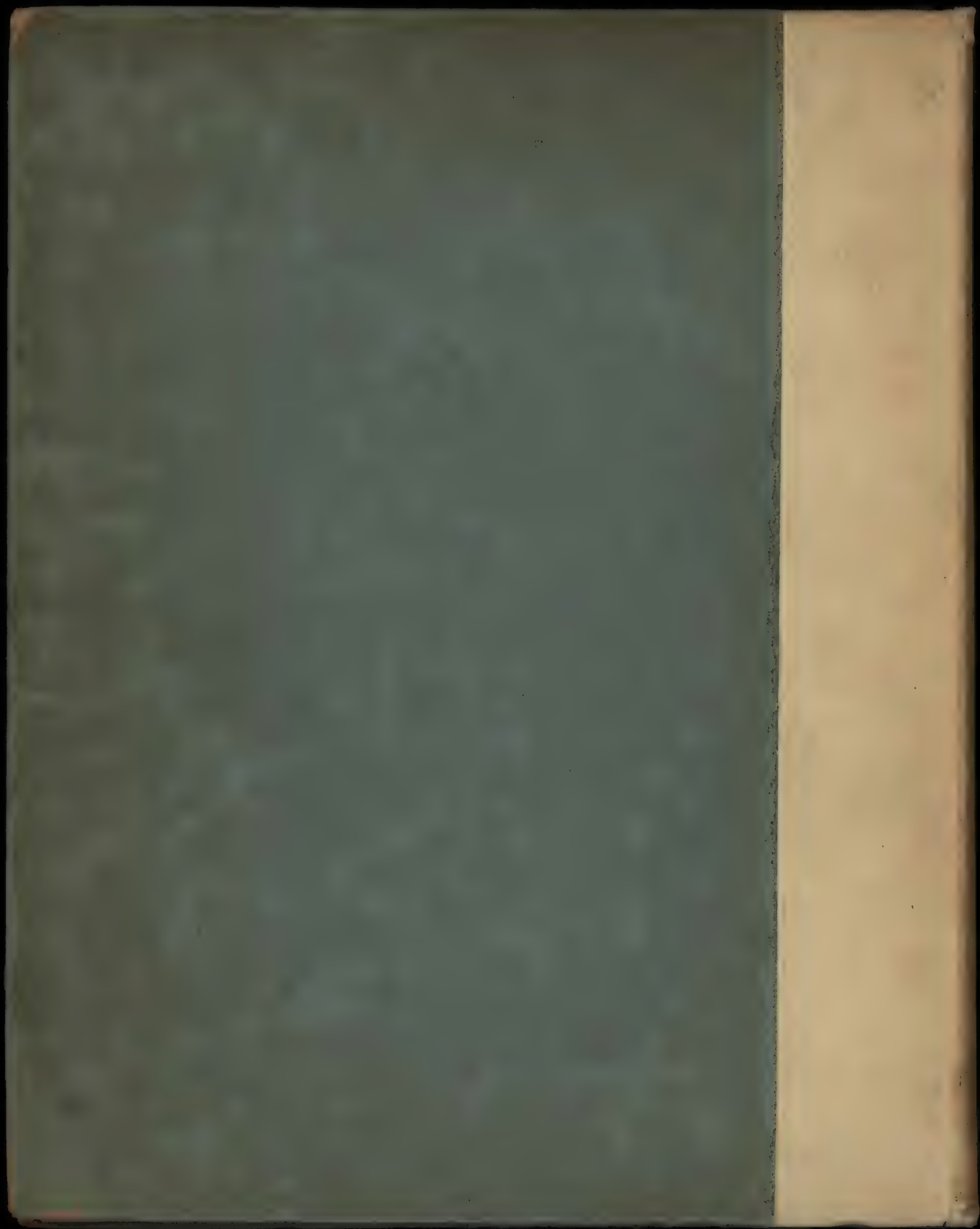
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THE SALE ROOM.

PORTRAITS BY CONSTABLE AND REYNOLDS

Pictures by Old Masters and artists of the Early English school, from a number of sources, realized £4,390 at Sotheby's on Thursday. A portrait of Lady Croft, formerly Miss Lewis, of Malvern Hall, in white dress, a half figure in a landscape, catalogued as by John Constable, brought £1,040, the top price of the afternoon, and fell to Messrs. Pawsey and Payne. This picture was formerly the property of the Countess of Dysart.

A flower piece by Baptiste, 24in. by 28in., brought £160 (Dunthorne); a portrait by A. F. Callet of Louis XVI. of France, in coronation robes, 67in. by 52in., inscribed on the frame, "donné par le Roi à M. le Baron de Viomenil en l'année 1783"—£390 (Hambury); Sir Joshua Reynolds's group of Edward Gordon, his sister Mrs. Mills, and her husband, three full-length figures on canvas, 29in. by 41in.—£230 (Pawsey and Payne); Sir Peter Lely's portrait of the Duchess of Portsmouth in purple robe and blue mantle—£240 (Mrs. Hankin); T. Gainsborough's portrait of Charles Watkins Meysey, in grey coat, holding a hat—£150 (Chester Street Galleries); and F. Cotes's portrait of Mrs. Baldwin, in white silk dress with blue bows—£100 (Agnew).

Sotheby's sale yesterday of old English and other porcelain and furniture totalled £1,570 6s., a Chippendale mahogany break-front bookcase, with carved architectural pediment and side columns, 100in. by 81in., selling for £90 (Chaundy); and a set of 16 Hepplewhite mahogany chairs, of which two are armchairs, with plain shield backs—£195 (Mallett).

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